

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

OF

AUSTRALIAN LIFE.

BY

MRS. CHARLES CLACY,

AUTHOR OF "A LADY'S VISIT TO THE GOLD DIGGINGS."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1854.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY J. CLAYTON, CRANE COURT, FLEET STREET.

TO HER FRIEND,

MRS. WOOD,

These Volumes

ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY

THE AUTHOR,

IN THE HOPE THAT,

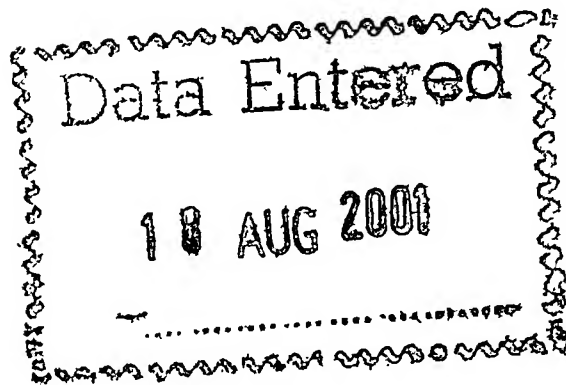
AS SHE HAS RESIDED MANY YEARS IN AUSTRALIA,

THE FOLLOWING SKETCHES

MAY PERCHANCE RECAL SOME PLEASING REMINISCENCES

OF

HER LATE COLONIAL HOME.



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LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

OF

AUSTRALIAN LIFE.

EMMELINE.

CHAPTER I.

A matrimonial *tête-à-tête*, and a family retrospect.

“WELL, my dear”—observed Mr. James Silvester to his wife, as they sat together beside a warm fire one winter’s evening a dozen years ago, enjoying a matrimonial colloquy before retiring to rest—“Well, my dear, it’s very easy to be enraged and indignant, and so forth, at all George’s imprudences and scrapes, but the thing is—how can they be remedied now, and prevented for the future?”

“Such a disgrace to his family!”

“Let bygones be bygones,” meekly said her spouse, in as conciliatory a tone as he possessed.

“Such shameful conduct to poor dear Emmeline!”

“‘Poor dear Emmeline!’—am I mad or asleep?” he almost exclaimed aloud; but he fortunately controlled himself in time, and remarked instead—

“Emmy is so young and so pretty, that I dare say some steadier fellow will soon drive all George’s nonsense out of her head.”

He must have been dreaming when he made such an unwise speech, and the effect it produced was instantaneous. Mrs. Silvester jerked her chair backwards from the fire as a preliminary movement, then, with a heightened colour and more than ordinary acidity of voice and manner, cried—

“Oh! pray don’t waste your pity on ‘Emmy’—a girl without any feeling, a

mere dependent—I've no doubt she tried to catch George, poor fellow! It's very hard upon me"—here a white cambric handkerchief was very effectively brought into play—"it's very hard upon me—of course it's nothing for you, because you couldn't help yourself having George for a brother; but for me to marry so well, as I thought, and to find one of the family always disgracing it by some wild prank or another, and then, as if that was not bad enough, to have a poor cousin forced into my house as a pretence of governess for the children, indeed!—and to hear her called 'so young and so pretty' to my face—odious creature!" and here the handkerchief was in such requisition that the unfortunate listener was foolish enough to hope that the vocal portion of his wife's anger had expended itself; but no; after a few semi-hysterical sobs, she concluded with—"I might have been a Hottentot or an Ojibbeway, to be used so shamefully!"

What could the poor man say to this? Nothing; so he wisely kept silence, warming his toes on the fender, listening to the regular ticking of the French clock on the mantel-piece, and most devoutly wishing himself in his comfortable bed, and his wife—fast asleep.

Mrs. Silvester, however, was by no means desirous that the discussion should thus be terminated, and, as her companion remained silent, she was compelled to recommence it herself.

“How I do hate a sulky temper—it’s the thing of all others I can’t bear with. You know you’re in the wrong, or you wouldn’t keep so quiet or look so miserable. Now, what’s to be done with George?”

“Wish I knew; if he’d marry and settle down steady—”

“What’s the use of talking in that way,” interrupted Mrs. Silvester, “when you know as well as I do that he’s just declared he can’t marry to please anybody, and says his attention to Emmeline meant nothing

at all. I only wish he was out of our neighbourhood, and then I wouldn't care what he did, so long as it was nothing outrageous to get into the papers."

"I really can't think what to do with him," observed the brother, gazing abstractedly into the hot embers.

"Of course not—you never do—I don't expect it of you. These seven years that we've been married, I've had all the thinking and talking to do for both ('No doubt of the *latter*,' thought poor James, but he wisely kept the opinion to himself); and nicely you'd have got on without me!"

"I'm sure of that, my dear," said he, with a little, a very, very little sarcasm in his voice, which providentially his wife did not perceive.

"Now, Mr. Silvester, my idea is—let George emigrate."

"Emigrate?"

"Yes, emigrate! What is there, pray, astonishing in that? Colonel Delamere and his family have just gone out to Australia.

and I heard of a lot of labourers and mechanics going, so he'll have company of all sorts; and why should *he* not go as well as any one else?"

"It sounds well; but there are many considerations—"

"Of course," interrupted Mrs. Silvester. She had a habit of seldom permitting her husband to finish a sentence. "It will be an expense to begin with—outfit, passage, etc. etc.; but Robert must halve it, and it would be better to spend a few hundreds a-piece, and have it done with; for you'll not fail, I hope, to make George understand that this is the last you'll do for him; and if he gets into a scrape at the antipodes, thank Heaven, we shall never hear of it, and he must just get out of it how he can."

Having thus set forth her opinion, Mrs. James Silvester rose, with a look that plainly said, "This is my ultimatum, and you'll not alter it—so there's an end of the matter."

And when she had fully determined upon a point, the Czar of all the Russias could be as easily turned from it as herself.

* * * * *

At a window belonging to an upper apartment in Mr. James Silvester's country mansion, sat a young girl—her pale features, rendered still more pale by the reflection of the cold moonbeams that fell upon her. She was gazing with an absent look upon the wintry scene without, which seemed to accord so well with her own dismal thoughts. Poor Emmeline!—so fair and young, with your warm, unhackneyed heart and sensitive feelings, that serve to make your dependent lot more hard to bear, and add a keener bitterness to every insult!

* * * * *

Emmeline Conroy was an orphan; her mother had been the only sister of the father of Robert, James, and George Silvester; she was, therefore, first cousin to the three brothers.

When very young, Emmeline's mother,

rather against her father's wishes, married a clergyman, whose profession was all he had to depend upon; and for many years she patiently laboured as a curate's wife, sharing his cares and privations, keeping up appearances on an income barely sufficient to supply them with food, and devoting all her spare moments to the education of, fortunately, their only child—Emmeline. Fourteen years after the marriage, she died, and Emmeline, thus prematurely called upon to act a woman's part, tenderly filled her place till, three years after, death again brought desolation on her home, and left her parentless.

Mr. Conroy had made no future provision for his daughter; how could he with an income of seventy pounds a year? He had no relatives, so the Silvesters felt themselves bound to do something for their cousin, and accordingly Mrs. James invited her to visit Moorlands.

Emmeline had never seen her mother's relatives; they had never noticed Mrs.

Conroy since her marriage—in fact, they forgot her existence, for Mr. Conroy's parish was in a rural district far from the busy town of L—, and, except for a letter written by him a few days before his death, they would probably have been as unmindful of the daughter as they had been of the mother. And Emmeline felt very timid at the thought of meeting these strange cousins; she looked forward to it with any feeling save that of pleasure: and when, a short time after her father's burial, she took her seat in the coach that was to convey her from her old home, and looked for the last time upon scenes so endeared by happy and childish associations; when she thought of the wealthy rector, living in ease and luxury, and, except on quarter-day, forgetting the very existence of the benefice from which he derived no inconsiderable income, and then recalled her own father's arduous life and comfortless death—no wonder that her feelings were embittered, and that she shrank from this her first solitary step

in life whilst such dark and dreary clouds obscured her path.

After the first stage, however, she experienced a pleasant surprise. A gentleman of prepossessing manner and appearance took the vacant seat beside her, and, after passing the first two or three miles in a strict, but not obtrusive, scrutiny of her countenance, introduced himself as her cousin, George Silvester, at the same time informing her that he had but just arrived from the Continent, and apologised for not having been earlier to meet her and saved her travelling any portion of the journey unattended.

Emmeline deeply felt the kindness—it formed such a contrast to his brothers' coolness—they had even pleaded business as an excuse for not attending her father's funeral; and this slight to the dead wounded her feelings more than she chose to confess even to herself; but all this was forgotten now—a weight of sorrow seemed taken from her heart by the sympathy his manner

evinced, and she freely gave herself up to the pleasure of listening to her cousin's brilliant conversation, and not the less enjoyed it because she surmised that he was exerting his fascinating powers of discourse for the sole purpose of drawing her from her own sad self; and to his success Emmeline's brightened face and sparkling eyes bore ample testimony ere they had travelled many miles in each other's company.

The next day they arrived at L—. Emmeline here exchanged her seat in the coach for one in a private carriage which, with Mrs. Silvester's housekeeper, was waiting for her. George now bade her a farewell for the present, with a warmly expressed hope of soon seeing her again.

Reassured by his kindness, she laughed at herself for all her previous dread of her cousins, and began to hope that they would all resemble the one whose acquaintance she had already made; she even found courage to address a few remarks to her sedate-

looking companion, but the chilling answers she received soon caused her to relapse into a silence which remained unbroken until the carriage drove into the entrance of Moorlands, and she found herself in her new home.

That evening, Mrs. James was everything that was kind and considerate; for Emmeline looked pale and wearied, and acquiesced in a way that was pronounced “very proper and becoming” in everything that was said to, or arranged for, her; but next morning, Mrs. James rather altered her opinion. A refreshing sleep had restored to Emmeline her natural colour, whilst her dark mourning dress displayed to perfection her well-rounded figure, and contrasted well with her clear complexion and the profusion of auburn hair, which, falling in natural curls over her shoulders, flung an additional shade over her pensive countenance.

Emmeline’s was a sweet face—one that we would welcome in our dreams; in it seemed embodied all that was pure and

feminine; it was the index of her mind—tender and purified in sorrow. She had watched beside the lifeless forms of those she loved, and had learned resignation and hope in the chamber of death.

James Silvester was charmed with his cousin, and openly expressed his admiration. The two children—so quick, as children ever are, to discover where they will meet with kindness—clung to her dress and played with her curls, till Mrs. James, who liked to be first in everything, scarcely knew how to restrain her vexation.

But the mischief was done, and, as she had herself invited her, it could not well be remedied at present, so Mrs. Silvester made her the offer of stopping as nursery governess to the two little girls, which Emmeline thankfully accepted—little aware that her education, conducted of late years by a careful and clever father, would have procured her a far more lucrative and agreeable situation.

As Emmeline's estimate of herself was

a very poor one, she gratefully undertook her far from pleasant duties. Teaching and tending the children was her most pleasant occupation, and had there been any other mistress in the house than the one there was, Emmeline could have been comparatively happy; it was when brought into contact with Mrs. James that she experienced the miseries of her position. Mrs. Silvester was one of those unamiable characters, who, having once taken a dislike to a person—reasonably or unreasonably, it mattered not—no good qualities on their part could mitigate her inimical feelings, or prevent her from displaying them on every available occasion; therefore, upon the unfortunate Emmeline, when sorrowful with reflecting on her lost parents and desolate future, the constant inuendos of “dependents” and “charity” fell with double weight, and keenly wounded her sensitive spirit.

Let me now endeavour to describe the three brothers.

Robert, the eldest, was a bachelor, and of a thoroughly selfish disposition. He was a mere man of business—nothing more—and devoted his whole life and energies to the maintaining the good standing of the house of which he and James were sole managers. He was a bachelor and selfish, as I have said—two things which, in his case, appeared to grow out of, and strengthen, one another; for, as his innate selfishness would not allow him to marry, and bring into his household one who might consider herself entitled to divide his sway, so his remaining a bachelor left him nothing to indulge or consult but self. His intercourse with James was small, for he disliked his sister-in-law; and with George still less, for his wild and reckless way of living was the one least calculated to find favour with his business-engrossed brother.

James was naturally of a far better nature; but he had the misfortune of a worldly woman for a wife, and as his mind was not strong enough to lead hers, or even to

maintain its own individuality, he gradually succumbed beneath her superior intellect, and became little better than a good-natured, well-meaning, but withal, helpless puppet in her hands. At times he would rebel, but it was seldom, and the matrimonial warfare was never of long duration, and she contrived, in the main, by dint of anger or caresses, to win or scold him into obedience.

George, the youngest, resembled neither. He detested business, and he had a most decided will of his own; but he was self-indulgent and generous to a fault; the consequence of which was that, at five-and-twenty, he had squandered his share of his father's property, and now, without a profession or pursuit, had come to his brother James for assistance.

Emmeline had not long been a resident at Moorlands before a great change might have been discerned in Robert. He talked less of 'Change, foreign houses, or percentage—dressed after a more youthful fashion—in fact, he was in love. His visits

to Moorlands became more frequent than they had ever been—at first gradually, so that it was several months before Mrs. James, with all her acuteness, surmised how matters stood.

That Robert should marry was quite against her wishes, and a thing that she determined, if possible, to prevent, for, relying upon his bachelor habits, she had calculated upon her own children inheriting his wealth; and that a dependent cousin should step in between her and any object of her life, was too much for her to suffer with impunity. Mrs. James controlled her resentment, however, for, wisely considering that an outburst of her wrath upon Emmeline would, perhaps, bring the affair to a crisis, she contented herself with carefully noting all that passed; and as she soon made the discovery that, however Robert might feel towards Emmeline, Emmeline felt anything but affection for him, she thought matters were, after all, not so bad as they seemed.

Robert was certainly the last person likely to interest Emmeline; this was so far well for Mrs. James; and, to make her game more certain, she invited George (who was rustivating somewhere whilst his brothers got over their consternation at his extravagance) to take up his abode at Moorlands, hoping that he might attract Emmeline's attention, and cause Robert to draw back.

The plan appeared to succeed most admirably as far as George was concerned. He evidently admired his cousin; he walked with her; drew or read with her; and completely pushed his elder and graver brother into the shade; and, perfectly unmindful of his own difficulties and uncertain position, threw his whole energies into the one pursuit of pleasing Emmeline.

If this delighted Mrs. Silvester, it gave no less satisfaction to the really good-hearted James. If George would only marry, he thought, and settle down quietly, it would be easy to get him some appointment or find

some opening for him. . But these expectations were destined to be dashed to the ground.

About two weeks before the matrimonial *tête-à-tête* with which the chapter opens, the conduct of George had become extremely unsatisfactory. He absented himself from Moorlands for days together, he displayed towards Emmeline a manner so cold and constrained that none could fail to observe it, and her pale face and trembling voice showed how deeply it was felt.

As the most straightforward way of remedying this, James taxed his brother with it. George appeared agitated; then, recovering composure, assured his brother that his feelings towards Emmeline had always been most *cousinly*, and that, far from having the slightest intention of marrying her, there were insurmountable reasons to prevent him. ^{and} He begged James to excuse his immediate withdrawal from Moorlands, and reminded him of his promise to assist him in again becoming independent.

The first determination of James was to conceal from his wife all that George had said concerning Emmeline, as he rightly judged that she would not fail to acquaint her with it, and that, too, in a manner little calculated to soothe her wounded feelings; but this resolution soon faded away in Mrs. Silvester's presence, and she quickly learnt the whole, and, as speedily as possible, hastened to "condole with Emmeline on having been rejected by her cousin George;" and, leaving the unhappy girl to console herself as best she could, she rejoined her husband, to talk the matter over as composedly as though she had not left one breaking heart to bear its bitter burden alone.

* * * * *

Emmeline gazed upon that chilling scene long after all around her were hushed in slumber, and felt how that wintry night resembled her own existence — cold and dreary; and her heart sighed sadly and in vain for her mother's soothing voice and

tender caresses. She looked upon the sky, where myriads of stars glowed brightly, and a dream of her childhood, when she fancied that the stars were the eyes of the angels watching over the unhappy ones on earth, came to her mind. She still looked upwards, but with a calmer brow: she experienced a sensation of peace and serenity; that childish remembrance had cheered her heart, and she no longer felt comfortless or alone.

CHAPTER II.

Bush adventures often more exciting than agreeable.

SIX weeks after Mrs. James had expressed her opinion that he should emigrate to Australia, George was on board a merchant vessel, leaving the white cliffs of England far behind him. At that time a voyage to the colonies was not the every-day occurrence that it now is, and George, daring and reckless as he was, felt a sense of desolation and despondency creep over him that he could not easily shake off. But soon the Bay of Biscay made him forget the past in the perils and excitement of the present; and, amid the roar of the tempest and the waves, he forgot the ties that he had left

behind him, and entered with spirit into the wild and dangerous scene.

They left the boisterous bay in safety, and were soon on the broad ocean; and in about six months, with a delight unknown to those whose stay on board ship has never exceeded a few days at a time, he landed in New South Wales.

Here everything surprised and delighted George; he had expected a straggling, half-built town, and found a city, which, in many respects, may dare to rival our great metropolis, and need not dread the contrast. He brought good introductions, had a supply of ready money, and was accordingly well received, and soon found himself the gayest among the gay people of Sydney.

If his purse could have been ever full, this would have been a very pleasant life; as it was, after a few months thus spent, he thought it high time to look to the future. He determined to try bush life, and collecting two or three introductory letters to squatters in the Illawarra district, and

making up a small bundle of the most indispensable articles, he started on horseback from Sydney.

After riding for more than twenty miles through a thickly wooded country, he came to the town of Liverpool, which, presenting a very dull and uninviting appearance, he merely passed without halting, and trusted to finding some inn on the roadside, in the course of a mile or so, where he could rest for the night; for although the often-spoken-of hospitality of the bush is a fact, yet in the neighbourhood of the towns, the "march of civilisation" has supplied its place by a number of small, English-looking, country inns, which bear an exact resemblance to the "Rising Suns" and "Red Lions" of England, except in their extravagant charges and want of cleanliness, which serve as a reminder to the traveller that he is in a new country.

Among his letters of introduction was one to a Mr. Mortimer, whose station was situated to the south of the Illawarra district,

which is itself about a hundred miles to the south of Sydney. Having heard much of the natural beauties of that part of the country, he determined that to this gentleman his first visit should be paid.

Having passed the night at a roadside inn, the next morning at early dawn he was preparing to continue his journey. As he was about to mount his horse he saw two rough-looking fellows busily engaged in yoking their bullocks to a dray, which was loaded with a strange assemblage of commodities for the bush.

“New chum, I guess,” observed one, glancing at George.

“Why, yes, my good fellow, I’m new to the bush at any rate: where are you and your dray bound?”

“Beyond Illawarra.”

“That’s strange: I’m going there myself.”

“Then you’d better by half come along of us,” said the bullock-driver; “there’s some awkward bits, where you’d be like to lose yourself. New coves” (eyeing George with

no little contempt) “should n’t be so ready to try their hands at bushing it by themselves.”

The proposition suited George well, for his lonely ride of the day before had not been particularly cheerful, so off they all started together.

Their road took them through many a romantic ravine, where the settlers had not yet disturbed the almost unbroken stillness that reigned among the deep shadows of those primeval forests. A wild and glorious scene soon burst upon them. They were upon a slight elevation of ground, broken by masses of rocks or groups of tall, graceful trees; precipices rose around them, covered with a massive brushwood which defied the rays of the sun that endeavoured to penetrate them; and now the eye lighted on some tiny glen, where gay-plumaged birds and richly coloured wild flowers found a home. At the foot of the slight declivity on which they stood, a small creek wound its way amid the wild rocks and foliage: now

glistening in and reflecting back on its rippled surface the golden light of noonday or the frowning masses of rocks; now almost lost beneath the overhanging foliage, and assuming its dark tints as it passed onwards through the bush.

It was a truly Australian scene; and even the rough bullock-drivers paused to gaze upon it, ere they broke the calm silence of the spot by the sharp cracks of their long whips as they proceeded into the forests beyond.

Here they camped and passed the evening, as George thought most pleasantly, by narrating the various exploits of some runaway convicts who had lately taken to the bush, and were said to be very partial to the part where they were now encamped. Several terrible encounters had taken place but a short time previous; and the excitement of listening to the narrations of his companions made George quite anxious for an affray with them himself.

His wish was gratified sooner than was agreeable.

The next morning by five o'clock they were pursuing their journey, which led them over several ranges of a splendidly wooded country.

"I think," said George, as they came to the foot of a hill which the drivers expressed their intention of going round, so as to save their animals the fatigue of ascending it—"I think that I will keep straight ahead and meet you on the other side: there ought to be a fine view from the summit; and I'm tired of keeping pace with those slow beasts of yours."

"As you please, mate; you'd be safer a deal with us, for we do know our road; but young hands must always be trying fresh ways. However, a man should buy his own experience, for he don't value other folks' as he ought."

"Good-bye," laughed George, amused at a bullock-driver philosophising in the bush; "I hope to meet you before dinner-time."

"Better take this bit of damper along with you;" and as our hero knew by

experience the appetising effects of a morning ride in the bush, he not only took the proffered damper, but filled his flask anew with a half-and-half decoction of brandy and water.

Thus provided, as he thought, against all possible emergencies, he ascended the hill. The trees grew more closely together, and the underwood became thicker, as he advanced; the former consisted principally of stringy bark of a stunted growth, and the dismal appearance of the forest, combined with feeling himself so entirely alone, made him almost ready to wish himself with his former companions. As this was impossible, he urged his horse forward, so as to rejoin them as soon as possible.

Four or five hours thus passed, and he began to think it strange that his path still led him upwards; sometimes a slight declivity made him hope soon to reach the open plain and see some traces of his friends; but these delusive expectations were always quickly checked by the ground again rising

before him. Was he never to reach the summit, or had he lost his correct path, and was wandering amidst the ranges, in a direction totally different to the one he desired?

The very idea of being thus lost confused his senses, and all presence of mind forsook him. The sun was his only guide, but that was of little avail to one unaccustomed to bush travelling, and unacquainted with the general "lay" of the country. He had heard of persons in his predicament trusting to the sagacity of their horse; and accordingly, giving the reins to his, he let the animal wander whithersoever it chose. As the horse knew no more of the country than his master, and had no reminiscences of a home in the neighbourhood to guide his steps, he was of little assistance in extricating George from his dilemma; perhaps, had he given him the reins sooner, he would have retraced his way to the spot where they had camped the night before; but now the poor animal, being tired and warm with uphill work, brought himself and master to a

clear stream, which probably flowed down the ranges into the creek that I have before described.

George drank eagerly of the cool water, and, tying his horse to a tree, sat upon the ground near him to rest awhile and quietly to consider on what was the best to be done. It was now nearly sunset, and there seemed no resource for him but to make a resting-place where he was, and trust to the morrow to find some means of escaping from his unpleasant position.

In spite of his anxiety he slept soundly, with his gun ready loaded by his side, and a pistol in his right hand; the damper, there is no need to say, had entirely vanished before he prepared to sleep.

It was not in the height of summer, so that the nights were none too warm; and when he awoke, about an hour before sunrise, he felt miserably chilly and uncomfortable. There is nothing like a cold, raw morning to damp a man's courage, particularly if no breakfast be added to it; but

nature had endowed George with a daring disposition, and several sharp turns soon made the blood to circulate more quickly in his veins, and restored the customary buoyancy of his spirits.

He now sat upon the ground and thought over his situation—little need to say it was an unenviable one. He recalled the stories he had lately heard of the bushrangers—what if he should encounter them?—and whilst his thoughts were thus occupied he was startled by a sound apparently not far distant.

“If not an animal,” said he to himself, “if it is a human being from whom those sounds proceed, I must sell my life as dearly as I can; for none but desperate people would inhabit this wild and dreary forest.”

The sounds approached nearer; George gazed intently into the bush, and then perceived the figure of a man advancing towards him. He was unarmed, and came forward with some slight hesitation, as if himself uncertain as to whom he might have to

encounter; but this, in the excitement of the moment, escaped George's observation. He remarked only that the stranger was a tall, powerful man; and, but for the superiority of his possessing firearms, George would not have felt over confident as to the result of a close conflict with him. How many comrades he might have in ambush was a consideration of a rather disagreeable nature.

As this rapidly passed through his mind, he thought it advisable to stop the nearer approach of the stranger—at least till he had learnt something respecting him; therefore, assuming as well as possible the manner of one accustomed to the bush and to deal with bushrangers, he cried out—

“Who are you?”

“The same man you robbed and pretty nearly murdered three days ago, and I've been living in this forest ever since, though it's a precious sight more like dying. You'll get nothing more out of me, so, if you mean to shoot me, get it over at once.”

“Who the devil do you take me for?”

cried out George, who had been so astonished at the first portion of the speech that he remained silent till it was concluded.

“A bushranger, to be sure; though I must confess you’re rather a more respectable-looking one than usual.”

“If you meet with no worse people than myself, you’ll not hurt,” replied George, laughing; and he then related his mishap in losing his way.

A very few minutes suffice to make people friends in the bush—no standing upon etiquette or requiring to be introduced there; and George soon learnt the misfortunes of his new acquaintance, which completely threw his own into the shade.

He was stock-keeper to an Illawarra settler, and had been to Campbeltown to receive some money for his master. On his way home he had been beset by a party of four bushrangers—robbed, knocked about, and probably would have been murdered, had not something diverted their attention and made them hurry away, leaving him upon the

ground (as they most likely thought dead), stunned and greatly injured by their blows.

Left alone in the bush, plundered of every article that could have been of service to him, starvation appeared inevitable; and such would possibly have been his miserable fate, had not he stumbled on his clasp-knife, which providentially had dropped from him in the scuffle, and remained unnoticed on the ground. By means of this he, with some difficulty, killed an opossum, which, although bad eating, was better than nothing; and this, with the tree-grubs, or maggots, and a few snakes, had been all on which he had subsisted for the last three days.

“But, thank God,” he added, “I’ll have some kangaroo steak before sunset;” and at this moment a large one came springing through the brushwood, and bounded on before them.

“There’s a boomah!—something like a kangaroo, that;” and whilst saying this he snatched the gun from the hand of George—levelled—fired; and the animal, though mor-

tally wounded, still sprang on through the forest—the two pursuing it.

Gradually the bounds became slower and more weak, and at length, with one convulsive spring, it fell dead upon the ground.

“What a noble fellow!” said the stranger, as, panting with the chase, they reached the spot where it had fallen; “why, he’s a regular ‘old man kangaroo,’ and must have stood pretty nigh six feet. And now let’s carry him to where we met, and cook ourselves a good breakfast.”

The kangaroo conveyed to George’s camping-place, he, with true bush freemasonry, took possession of George’s knife, and, cutting some steaks from the legs—the titbit of the animal—prepared to cook them.

George busied himself in kindling a fire, and, the wood being dry, it soon became a heap of red-hot embers, upon which the steaks were placed; this, with water from the stream, qualified by a little of the brandy, formed, to them, a most delicious repast.

“ Well, I feel quite a different being to what I did three hours ago,” observed Tom Nicholls. “ It’s astonishing what an alteration a good meal makes in a man. I couldn’t sleep last night for cold and hunger, and got wandering about almost before it was light; and just before I saw you, if I’d had a rope, I’d have hung myself with pleasure.”

“ I wonder you did not run away from me, as you took me for a bushranger.”

“ I felt too despairing for that; I wouldn’t have stirred to save my life; I was getting regularly starved out.”

“ How did you find the grubs you were speaking of just now?” inquired George.

“ By searching the trees for them. I’ve seen the natives do that; and very delicious they are too, with a sort of nutty flavour.”

George made a grimace.

“ I think I must be pretty hungry before I’d eat a great maggot.”

“ So I’ve thought, often enough, till I once saw some natives eating them with great relish, and I thought I’d try. There’s

no knowing what one may come to in this country ; and thankful I should have been if I could have found plenty of the things you have such a horror of."

" And what prevented you ?"

" Want of gum-trees. You see these are, principally, stringy bark ; and these maggots, as you call them, are found mostly in the gum-trees, under the bark ; but, if I could only have kindled a fire, I'd have cooked some snakes. I half cooked my opossum on some hot ashes the bushrangers had used ; but was too senseless with fright and pain (for they mauled me about a good deal) to think of keeping them alight."

" How would you have cooked the snakes ?"

" Flung them on the fire and taken them off when done," answered Tom, to whom the idea of eating snakes and worms had become quite natural during his three days' wanderings.

" I hope I may never need to eat them," returned George. " Thank Heavens, we've a good supply of ammunition, and that kangaroo ought to last some time."

“But the cooking it—that’s the difficulty. A mighty imprudent thing we’ve done as it is—enough to bring those bushrangers at us, if they’re still in these parts; for they’d guess it was some one going up country and lost their track.”

“More likely think it was yourself, as they left you here.”

“Not they; all they’d expect to find of me, would be my skeleton at the foot of a stringy bark. Suppose we divide arms a little, in case of an attack. How are we off for powder?”

“Flask full, and shot-bag ditto,” said George, congratulating himself on having filled them before leaving the bullock-drivers; “and as to bullets, here are nineteen, and plenty of percussion-caps and wadding.”

A division of arms now took place; and being thus, to a certain extent, prepared for all hazards, they turned their thoughts to getting out of the forest.

“That animal,” said Tom, looking at the horse, “will be rather in the way; for ten

to one we have to force a road through the underwood. However, he must carry the best part of the kangaroo as long as we can keep him with us. Now, where's the sun? I see—we must strike off here" (pointing to the right), "and take some object in our eye, or we shall never keep a straight path. That great tree yonder, bigger than its mates, will just do; and when we've reached that, we'll take another observation, as the sailors say. Now, let's be off, in case Colney or his mates have seen our smoke."

"I see you're accustomed to the bush," said George.

"I've had more than twenty years of it, and this last three days roaming by myself, so that I ought to know something of it."

"I am only surprised that you did not get out of the forest before you met me."

"Why, it's the difference of being starved or eating a hearty meal. My first thought, after I recovered my senses, was to get food, and so I wandered about no one knows

where. But it's an awful thing to be lost in the bush alone, even if you have plenty of provender with you."

"I know that," said George; "I felt it yesterday; I seemed in a sort of dreamy bewilderment—not knowing where to turn, and apparently unable to concentrate my thoughts—"

"Hush!" interrupted the other; and he flung himself upon the ground, where his well-practised ear could better distinguish between the boundings of an animal and the footsteps of man.

"It's gone, whatever it was," said he, as he regained his feet. "I can't help fancying those bushrangers are hanging about."

"They seem to have given you a terrible fright."

"True," returned Tom, "I don't mind owning it. I *am* in a mortal fear of them; and so you'd be, if you knew their leader."

"Who is he?"

"Colney, to be sure; and, as a specimen of his character, I'll tell you his last known

exploit before molesting me. He's a convict, you must know; most, if not all, of these bushranging vagabonds are runaway convicts; and Colney was Government servant to a settler near ——. Well, he did something wrong; what, is more than I've heard; and he was had up before the nearest magistrate, and sentenced to twenty-five lashes. That put his blood up; he swore he'd be revenged on his mistress, for she'd been the main hand in getting the master to punish him, and dearly she paid for it in the end. He didn't make much secret of his revengeful wishes, so he was watched pretty close; and they'd have returned him to Government, but work was heavy at the time, and hands few. Well, what does he do one day but watches his opportunity and murders the poor mistress, and then, as he knew he was always well looked after when outside the house, he strips the poor woman's dress from her—horrible, wasn't it?—puts it on somehow about himself, and her large sun-bonnet and cloak, and walks out as cool as you can

believe. Colney's a small thin man—not a great fellow, as you'd imagine him to be—and he actually passed by some other servants without so much as their guessing who it was, and, they say, within two or three hundred yards of the master himself. However, to cut my story short, he got clear off, and the clothes were found afterwards where he'd pitched them away; and there's a nice reward out for him, I guess."

Now, although Tom rather enjoyed telling the story—which he did in a mysterious under-tone, and with constant interruptions for the sake of listening—it was not a very inspiring one for George to hear; and he began to think that in the bush, "discretion was the better part of valour," particularly when such sanguinary mortals as Colney were likely to be encountered.

"Still you may be mistaken," said he, "as to his heading the party who attacked you."

"Mistaken?—Not I; Colney's easy to be known, and that helps to make him desperate, I believe. It's a wonder and a miracle

that he didn't put an end to me; but they must have heard something, or had other business in hand."

"Well, but how is he known so readily?" demanded George. "I'm rather curious to have a personal description of this redoubtable monster."

"I'm no hand at your personal descriptions. Colney's easy to tell by a great red scar right across his forehead; except that, he's not so bad-looking when he's not in a rage, and then—Oh Lord!" and he suddenly stopped.

George did the same; and both could distinguish a rustling noise near them, and now and again the fall of a footstep, or even of more than one.

To say that his heart did not throb more violently than usual would be contrary to truth; but George was as brave as he was adventurous, and, after the first moment of surprise, it was the excitement of danger, not the fear of it, that occasioned its quickened pulsations.

Nor was Tom deficient in courage; less daring than his companion, he certainly was, but he had genuine English blood in his veins, and needed only the stimulus of a comrade to make him strong enough to engage two together.

“Now,” said George, “we’d better get on, and not stand like targets to be shot at.”

“They’ve only one gun among them, and that Colney uses.”

“Then let us move on—the nearer we can get to the edge of the forest the better;” and for an hour or more they pursued their way, occasionally pausing, as before, to listen—sometimes catching, they thought, the sound of footsteps; sometimes hearing only the rustling of the leaves or the movements of the birds.

“Here they are!” cried Tom, suddenly, as a gun was fired, and the bullet came whistling close past his ear.

“We must plant our backs against something, and fire at them carefully when they appear. All we have to dread is being over-

powered by numbers if we get to close quarters; but we're better armed;" and as he said this, George cast his eye round for a suitable stand.

He espied a large rock, against which they now planted themselves, having first tied the horse to a tree close by.

"I wish they'd come on at once."

"No fear—they'll be here soon enough for me; and if that Colney only aims as he usually does, one of us might just as well have eaten no kangaroo—it was a great waste to kill the poor animal."

George, despite the danger in which he stood, could not forbear a smile at the pathetic tone in which this was said; but it soon gave place to a graver expression as two balls came through the air, one of which left a vacancy in the low crown of his broad-brimmed straw hat.

"Ventilation gratis—lucky I'm only five feet ten," said he, looking as unconcerned as possible, for he saw that Tom was rather dispirited at the *double* discharge.

“ If we could but see the scoundrels, instead of only hearing their bullets, and, d—it, feeling them too,” Tom added, as another shot told upon his left shoulder.

“ They have more than one gun, that’s evident.”

“ Killed some poor devil, I’ll be bound.”

“ Ah, there’s an aim !” and George fired with such good effect that the advancing figure fell.

It was Colney himself; and, his leg being wounded by the shot, he, having managed to raise himself to his feet, limped away to his former lurking-place, and for a short time no further attack was made.

“ What can the rascals be up to now ?” inquired George. “ You know their ways better than I do ; should you fancy they have given us up as a bad job ?”

“ Not with Colney at their head ; and I fancy that chap you hit was him.”

“ The greater reason for their leaving us.”

“ Little you know Colney—he’s a very devil for revenge ; and you’re a marked man with him from this hour.”

“Then I suppose we shall hear or feel something of them in a minute.”

“If that animal would carry us now, we might have a chance,” said Tom, and he advanced towards the horse. “Why, he’s lamed!”

It was true: a shot had struck one of his fore legs.

Whilst examining the extent of the injury, which, after all, was but slight, the discharge of a gun sent Tom back to the rock. Several shots now whizzed past without taking effect, for, as there was a slightly cleared space before them, the bushrangers, in order to protect their own persons, remained among the trees, and were too far off to take an exact aim.

But another expedient proved more successful.

Before the echoes of the last shots had died away, a slight noise above him made George cast up his eyes, and one glance revealed the mischief they had planned and executed during the time they had left them unmolested.

Peering over the summit of the rock, were two or three figures, and the heavy stones they were holding ready to cast down upon their heads, left no doubt as to their intentions.

It was the act of a moment to spring aside and to push Tom out of immediate danger, and the next minute two large pieces of rock fell at their feet.

“The devil!” shouted Tom, and he fired: it was waste of powder and shot, for the assailants instantly withdrew.

“Pleasant this,” he muttered; but there was no time for reflection—two more bullets whistled through the air, and Tom was again wounded.

The next minute a stone from above knocked his gun from George’s hand, and, without the delay of a second, another, flung by a safer arm—that of Colney himself—descended on his head, and he sank, stunned, to the earth.

CHAPTER III.

Home in Illawarra.

WHEN George partly recovered his senses a confused murmur of voices sounded in his ears ; to this succeeded a sensation of a numbing pain about his head, with very indistinct ideas as to how it came there. He opened his eyes, and the faces that surrounded him were no less strange than their voices, though an indescribable feeling convinced him that they were friends.

Immediately on perceiving his return to consciousness, one of them held a tin pannikin, containing that universal remedy for all illnesses in the bush, brandy and water, to his lips ; and, after taking a copious draught

of it, George felt himself no little revived, and at last able to ask and answer various queries.

His first inquiry was, as to the fate of his friend; and he was informed that he was alive, but with one arm broken and two disagreeable wounds from a knife.

“But I say, mates,” said one, more considerate than his companions, “as we must wait here till the others hail us, instead of worrying him with a lot of questions, suppose I tell him how we came up, and then, p’raps, he won’t mind satisfying our curiosity a bit. You see, friend (addressing George), we’re employed by Colney’s master, and we came this way, as we heard he’d taken to this part of the bush, and the firing led us to where you were; though, by the time we came up, it was almost too late to save your lives. I saw at the moment the stand you’d made, and the stones and bits of rock on the ground showed me how the villains had attacked you in two ways; but by the time we came up they had left the top of the

rock. Colney was standing over you, and in another minute you'd have been in a queer condition; but he heard us, and away he was behind the rock—got hold of your horse, and was soon out of sight, though he rather limped—”

“ And Tom ? ”

“ Your mate ?—Oh, he was fighting desperately, and was almost mastered; however, they followed Colney's example, and made off before we could catch them.”

“ And where is he now ? ”

“ Who ? Colney ?—wish I knew.”

“ No, my comrade.”

“ Ah ! there was a piece of good luck that don't happen to many. We passed a dray on the road, taking things up country, and one of the men is used to bush accidents, and makes a capital doctor on a sudden; so part of my people have carried him down there—poor fellow's too weakened to walk—and then they're to come back for you. How did you meet with Colney ? ”

This George soon explained.

“ Well, it was a good day’s work to lame him ; won’t he remember you ; but I dare say we shall soon catch him, as he’ll not be quite so active. Here they come ; and what on earth have they got with them ? Oh ! I see—a mattress—part of their goods, I suppose. Well, there’s no place on earth like an Australian bush for finding friendly folks. Well, good-bye ; you’ll do now. I must follow up that vagabond, and I hope you may never see him again.”

“ I hope not,” said George, with a faint smile, for the exertion of talking and listening had been too much for him.

Farewells and thanks were spoken ; he was gently lifted on to the mattress and carried to the outskirts of the forest, which was not (so deceitful is the bush) much more than a mile from the spot where they imagined themselves lost.

Here he found the identical dray and drivers that he had quitted ; for they, alarmed at not meeting him, had retraced their road as far as their previous night’s camping-

place, and, not finding him, they had, after searching about for some time, gone on to their destination with heavy hearts; for, almost a stranger as George was, there was something so genial and daring in his disposition, without the slightest assumption of pride in his manner towards them, that they would have run almost any risk for the sake of seeing him safe. Probably their interest in him was increased by the circumstance that their master was Mr. Mortimer, the same gentleman to whom George was going.

The impromptu *Æsculapius* soon bound up Tom's broken arm; and having carefully placed it between splints, which were improvised from the bark of a tree, assured him that a few days would set it to rights.

With a slower pace they proceeded towards Illawarra, and, after travelling only a few miles, halted for the night.

The next morning they pursued their course, though still very slowly, for the convenience of the invalids. George, however, scarcely now deserved to be considered one,

for he had nearly recovered the effects of the affray.

About noon, after travelling over several ranges, an exquisite scene burst upon them as they stood upon one of the heights.

Before them, bounding the horizon, were the clear blue waves of the South Pacific, heaving to and fro in the blaze of an Australian noontide sun; at their feet, yet still distant, was Illawarra, with its lakes and shady glens—its tropical foliage—its clustering vines—its meadows filled with cattle—its farms and Arcadian-looking homesteads, which told of the presence of civilized man; behind were the parched and sandy forests, whose arid soil and stunted trees served to give greater effect to the lovely view, on which even the roughest could not gaze without pleasure.

“ Well may this be called the ‘ Eden of New South Wales,’ ” murmured George to himself; “ our first parents could scarcely have opened their eyes on a fairer spot.” And at this moment, as if to make the com-

parison more perfect, a slight rustling among the underwood could be heard, and a graceful snake, with head slightly raised, and body winding through the bush, came onwards to the spot where George remained rooted, as it were, with fascination.

It was about ten feet long, and nearly grey in colour; spotted with dark brown (hence this species is known as the carpet snake); and, from its length, appeared to George rather a formidable opponent. He was rather behind his companions at the time of its appearance; and when it approached to within five feet of himself he recovered his presence of mind, and retreated before it with rapid steps.

It advanced more swiftly towards him.

“ Turn off to the left,” shouted one of the draymen.

George had just time to obey the direction and spring aside as the snake passed over the place which he had left, and disappeared into the forest.

“ Well, I’ve had a narrow escape,” said

he to Tom, when he had caught up his party; "I declare I was more frightened at that snake than at Colney."

Tom laughed.

"They're nasty varmint enough at times—some of them at least; but that's not a hurtful sort."

"At all events it ran after me."

"Not it; it ran towards its hole, as they always will when they're frightened; and all you had to do was to step out of its way."

"Pity there should be any noxious creature in such a lovely country!"

"Why, as to that, this is not a natural country in anything."

"Not natural!" ejaculated George; "there's nothing very artificial here."

"About artificial I don't know," said Tom, sententiously; "I'm not learned; but I do know that most things in Australia are very unnatural."

"How so?"

"Why, in everything. There's the air, to begin with; it's so piping hot at Christmas

George ; “ and since I have been in Australia, it appears to me astounding that so few among the wealthy and influential look upon emigration in the important light it deserves. They know, or ought to know, that there are hundreds almost starving, and that there is a land where they might live in plenty, yet they look on supinely, content to watch the efforts of the few who nobly exert themselves to people this vast continent.”

Here the halting of the dray in a sheltered nook, where they intended to pass the night, put an end to the conversation.

In the course of the evening after this, they reached Mr. Mortimer's station, to whom George had already discovered that the dray belonged. Here he was received with the most hospitable attention by his host, who also pressed Tom to pass the night there. This Tom did ; but the next morning he accepted Mr. Mortimer's offer of the use of his spring-cart, and prepared to go, in spite of George's entreaties that he would remain.

“ I'll tell you how 'tis, sir,” said he, in

upon the past—upon the principal events of his own thoughtless and undisciplined existence, and then turned to the hopeless future—to the life-long penalty his past follies would entail upon him.

And thus he sorrowfully mused, till a return of the old recklessness came over him, and he shook off, as it were, the temporary depression of spirit, and with lighter steps walked slowly towards the house.

He had been hidden from sight by a group of trees intermingled with fern; and as he advanced, still concealed from the little party before the verandah, he obtained, without being himself seen, a closer view of them.

The children were sitting, as before, upon the ground, twining some wild flowers round the neck of their canine companion; beside them stood a young girl of about seventeen; and George had little doubt that she was Janet Mortimer, the only child of his host.

Janet had been born in the colony, and was therefore a “currency lass,” as they are termed. Her figure was slight and very

tall; her hair and complexion dark as a brunette; her eyes were of a deep blue, yet when they were cast upon the ground, so long and black were the fringes that overhung them, that a casual observer would have declared them of the same colour as her hair. She was simply attired, and stood in an easy, graceful attitude beside the children: now caressingly curling their long fair locks round her fingers; now gently stroking the smooth skin of the kangaroo-dog.

Either the footsteps of George became more distinct, or something attracted the attention of the animal towards him, for he now set up a loud and energetic barking, which brought the children to their feet, and compelled George to come forward and introduce himself.

“You are an early riser for one unaccustomed to the bush,” observed Janet, as soon as the first embarrassment at meeting a stranger had passed.

“Such a morning, and so lovely a place, would bring the most slothful from their

beds," replied he; "I cannot sufficiently admire your father's taste in selecting this spot for his abode."

"I imagine, at the time he settled here, convenience rather than scenery was his first object: a new settler is obliged to think of the useful to the prejudice of the ornamental; now, however, we are glad that chance led him to such a pleasant part of the country."

"You have been here all your life?"

"Yes; with the exception of two years that I was at school in Sydney. I was born here; and in a sequestered spot, not far from the house, lies my mother; she died a few hours after my birth: mine has been a truly motherless life."

Tears stood in her eyes as she said this in a low, sorrowful tone, as if speaking only to herself, and forgetful, for the moment, of the presence of George. A slight tinge of melancholy gave an air of subdued beauty to her features; the pearly drops quivered on her silken eyelashes; the low, sad tones of her voice found an echo in his own heart; he

glanced at her with more interest than he had done before. A few minutes ago he would have remembered her as a handsome girl; now he not only felt that she was beautiful, but most fascinating.

This feeling was but momentary; and, to break the awkward pause that ensued, he observed—

“This district appears rich in natural beauties: I plucked this gorgeous flower from its rocky bed this morning.”

“Ah, the rock-lily; it is, indeed, splendid, but very difficult to procure, as it generally grows on the edge of a precipice.”

“This cost me a little trouble and a few bruises,” said George, laughing, “and therefore I trust you will allow me to give it a more honourable resting-place than the one it now occupies in my hand.”

Janet blushed deeply; and George, emboldened by her silence, placed the rich scarlet lily among her luxuriant black tresses.

“Nothing like a bold hand in the bush,” thought he; “and my pretty friend seems by no means offended.”

For some while Janet walked beside him in silence, and, half unconsciously, they strayed to a little distance from the house. At length she said, in a subdued and embarrassed voice—

“ You must have felt surprised at my making a stranger a confidant of my sad feelings, but I have heard my father say that your parents and he were warm friends in their childhood: let us follow their example, and be friends; ” and she held out her hand, at the same time raising her eyes timidly to his face.

George warmly pressed the extended hand, and looked at her with a glance of such unequivocal admiration, that she cast her eyes to the ground, whilst a heightened colour mounted to her countenance: yet even at that moment there rose before him a remembrance of a pure and pensive face—of a voice whose every sound was gentle music; and as memory recalled the image of Emmeline with vivid distinctness, the palm-trees and strange ferns became indistinct as a distant picture; the scenes through which he had

passed appeared part of a troubled dream from which he was awakening; the fascination of the Australian girl lost its power; and thus lost in dreamy recollections, he walked moodily by her side till they returned to her father's dwelling.

If Janet remarked his sudden change of manner, she showed it not; but from that morning, during the time that he spent within the house, she devoted herself to his amusement: now filling the apartment with her splendid voice, which, though little cultivated, except by her indulgent father, possessed a natural melody and force that many a pupil of Benedict or Crivelli might envy; now challenging him to a wild ride in the bush, which can only be compared to a steeple-chase and fox-hunt in one; or now, in the dim evening shade, wandering by his side beneath the draperied branches of the caoutchouc-tree, recounting to him many a wondrous incident of bush or colonial life, or listening as he narrated adventures of his boyhood, or tales of that distant land she had never seen.

CHAPTER IV.

DEATH.

Blessed, yet sinful one, and broken hearted !
 The crowd are pointing at the thing forlorn,
 In wonder and in scorn !
 Thou weepest days of innocence departed ;
 Thou weepest, and thy tears have power to move
 The Lord to pity and to love.

The greatest of thy follies is forgiven,
 Even for the least of all the tears that shine
 On that pale cheek of thine.
 Thou didst kneel down to Him who came from Heaven,
 Evil and ignorant, and thou shalt rise
 Holy, and pure, and wise.

* * * * *

BRYANT'S *Translation from the Spanish of*
B. L. de Argensola.

It was not until after George had departed, never, most probably, to return, that Emmeline felt the full force of her attachment. To this was added the bitter knowledge that her love was not returned ; perhaps he even

despised her for allowing her heart to be so lightly won. Nowhere could she turn for sympathy or consolation. Her cousin Robert, it is true, gave unmistakeable evidence that he intended to honour her with a proposal; but, since her only friend was gone, she shrank from him, if possible, more than before. Mrs. Silvester continued the same, which is sufficient to denote that she was as disagreeable as her nature could make her. Was Emmeline pale or sad, then “she wondered proper pride didn’t enable her to conquer her love for a person who only laughed at her;” did Emmeline endeavour to look cheerful, and appear to derive pleasure from the merry ways and laughter of her little pupils, then Mrs. James was “surprised that she could give way to such light spirits, whilst, perhaps, her cousin was at that moment struggling for his life among the waves,” etc. etc. What use is it to give examples? It is quite enough to say that Mrs. James wished to make Emmeline unhappy; and she was one of those sort of

women who, if one way will not succeed with them, will try another and another.

Emmeline's only comfort was in her own mind—in remembering the excellent lessons of her father, and in planning pleasant visions for the future ; but she had little time allowed her for reflection ; in fact, one or two hours in the evening were all that she could call her own.

As the spring advanced she would often take advantage of the prolonged daylight to visit the inhabitants of some poor cottages, who always hailed her approach with pleasure. It was but little that she could do for them : perhaps bring a little frock for some half-clad child, made by her own hands when others were in slumber, or a trifling delicacy for a sick mother ; or, at times, the only assistance she could render was to hold a crying infant whilst its wearied mother rested, or to read from the Holy Book to the aged and ignorant. Yet, little as she did for the poor cottagers, it was done with a willing spirit ; not as a step-stone to heaven, or a

means of winning praise upon earth, but because to lighten the burden of her fellow-creatures was a balm to her own wounded heart, and to give happiness to others the only means of bringing it to herself.

Little imagine they, who go among the poor with tracts in their hands, bible words upon their lips, and pride and vainglory in their hearts, endeavouring to infuse spiritual life into their hearers, who, with those dear to them, are in temporal destitution and misery—whilst they who thus preach content and piety amid starvation and ignorance, live themselves in luxury and ease—little imagine they, that, at the last great day of reckoning, one who, for the love of the Saviour, has only so much as moistened the lips of a sufferer with cold water will be nearer heaven than themselves.

Emmeline would often, after a day of weariness and petty tyranny, solace herself by a visit to her humble friends; and she had her reward, not only in the peace of her own mind, but in the grateful love of those whom she tried to serve.

One evening she entered the cottage of a widow, who, having a room or two more than she herself occupied, added to her small means by letting them. Emmeline had often caught sight of a handsome little boy of about four years old, but whenever she had attempted to speak to him, his mother had uniformly called him away. Mrs. Larkins, who was a bit of a gossip, had often spoken of her "lodgers," as she called them, to Emmeline. The mother was a widow, and this boy was her only child. How she supported herself was a mystery, as she never did anything but use her needle for herself and son; seldom went out, and then only at dark; kept the little boy from mixing with other children; and was often low-spirited and in bad health, but would never hear of medical advice. "However," Mrs. Larkins would say, "she always pays me my rent reg'lar enough, which is the main thing, I consider; but I should like to know more about her."

On this evening, however, when Emme-

line, after knocking at the door and receiving no reply, gently lifted up the latch and entered, she saw in a moment that something had gone amiss. Mrs. Larkins was sitting by the fire in a brown study; and leaning against her knee, his eyes red, and face swollen with crying, was the little boy.

So dense was the good woman's reverie that it was only on Emmeline touching her shoulder that she sprang up and caught sight of her visitor.

"I'm right ashamed of myself, miss, to let you be standing here, and so tired and pale as you be looking" (here she dusted a wooden chair, and Emmeline seated herself); "but it's truth and I'm in great trouble to-night. Geordy, my boy, go run a little outside; the sun's not down yet. You must know, miss," continued she, as soon as the child was beyond earshot, "that I fear my poor lodger's in a bad way; I fear her days is numbered—I do, indeed, miss;" and the good-hearted Mrs. Larkins burst out crying.

"Come, cheer up, Mrs. Larkins," said

Emmeline; "we must not meet troubles half way: do you think I can be of any use to her?"

"The very thing I was a-coming to: for two or three hours afore she went to sleep she kept asking for Miss Emmeline Conroy; would they bring her to her afore she died; she must see Miss Emmeline Conroy, and so she went on; and now she's dropped asleep."

"I will wait here until she wakes," said Emmeline; and, after some minutes, Mrs. Larkins informed her that the sick woman was awake, and most anxious to see her.

Emmeline was immediately ushered into her room. Of what that room resembled, or of anything it contained, she had never any remembrance, for her whole attention was absorbed by the appearance of the invalid who reclined upon the bed, supported by pillows, and looking, if such a thing be possible, the living personification of death. But it was death bereft of its usual horrors, and shown only in the transparent skin,

the pallid cheek, the short and irregular breathing.

“ I am sorry to see you thus,” said Emmeline, in her softest tone ; “ but let us hope—”

“ Hope nothing, for my last hour is approaching ; yet, before it comes, I have much to say that will pain you to hear, and me to utter. And but for my boy, my darling boy ! You have seen him ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And did not trace his father’s features in his face : yet I thought you loved him. He loved you ; I know that, to my cost.”

“ What can you mean ? explain these strange hints,” exclaimed Emmeline, astonished, yet scarcely daring to give form to her vague conjectures.

“ I mean,” said the dying woman, “ that I am an unhappy one, not fit for your pure hands to touch, and that your cousin George is the father of my boy.”

Emmeline covered her face in her hands, completely shocked and overwhelmed by this sudden disclosure.

It was some moments before the unfortunate woman again spoke ; and then it was, at first, in a voice so low and depressed as to form a painful contrast to the energy with which her last words had been uttered.

“ I have not asked you to come here, Miss Conroy, simply to tell you this, but to ask a favour of your hands. Why I should hope in your kindness, I know not, though I have heard that you act Christianity as well as preach it. And then you loved him ; that will move you. But, first, I will shortly speak of my own miserable life.

“ I was not so old as you are now when I first saw Mr. Silvester ; and he was kind to me at a time when I was experiencing great unkindness from others ; for my mother had lately died, and my father had been years in his grave. I was living with my aunt, a cross, heartless old woman ; and, having been educated rather above my station, I felt the more the slights and menial offices she put upon me ; and so his kind words and looks won strangely on my heart ; and I left her—and with him.

“ We were privately married, and for some months I was happy ; but that time too quickly passed : anxiety succeeded, for he tired of me soon. I felt, myself, how inferior I was, and unable to retain his love ; and then he met with you, and a purer attachment filled his heart, and I was nothing to him. Do not think that he spoke to me of his love for you : he would never have mentioned your name to me, but it was in the silence of the night that I learnt his secret ; then, dreaming of you, he murmured your name, coupled with words of endearment—

“ Maddened with jealousy, I made his life wretched : my love seemed turned to hate ; I thought only of revenge. I was his wife : if I had lost all power over his heart, I could wound his honour—I took my boy with me, and fled with one of his boon companions.

“ My punishment soon commenced : he left me, and I knew not where to turn. Pride forbade my seeking my husband : friends, that had known me from childhood, coldly turned away ; relatives spurned ; my

own sex scorned, the other insulted me: all held back from one who had taken the first false step. There was no safety, no retreat; I must sink deeper into vice, or see my child die for lack of nourishment, or enter the workhouse walls, and give my darling up to strangers' unloving hands. This is how the good and the virtuous drive the erring to irretrievable destruction — they have not fallen; perhaps were never tempted; they have no mercy; they hold out no help to those who would thankfully retrieve the past, yet they wonder that crime and immorality increase. So I, who would have slaved to have eaten honestly earned bread, became a thing too vile for you to look upon.

“A year ago your cousin discovered my abode and my life; unknown to me he bought a small annuity, sufficient to—but I am dying; and my child!—I came here without his knowledge; resuming my maiden name, I wished to live where I could hear his mentioned—my breath seems failing me. With my last words I pray you watch over

my boy; tell him not of his mother's sins; teach him to love the God I have outraged: yet I hope—I dare to hope, for God is more merciful than man. I leave him in your care—wretch that I am, he is none the less your cousin's child. I could die happy if I thought there was one who would see in him, not his mother's sin, but a parentless—”

She sank back exhausted. During the first few sentences her voice had been weak and she had spoken slowly; but as she proceeded—as she spoke of her love, of the contumely she had endured, and of her child—her tones became energetic, her utterance more rapid. And, though at times almost gasping for breath, she barely allowed herself time to pause, until at length her whole strength failed her, and she fell back upon the pillow as though dead.

“Promise, promise,” she said, in a voice scarcely above a whisper.

“I do,” said Emmeline; “I will take this charge upon me: I will act towards him, as far as is in my power, as if he were my own.”

“ I hope it will not come to that,” laughed George ; “ I trust we may not need feminine assistance in keeping them at bay.”

“ Ah ! you ’ll perhaps be glad of it,” interrupted Janet, piqued at his railing tone ; “ but you ’d better complete your arrangements ; don’t let me hinder you,” and she retreated into the house.

During the remainder of the day no signs of Colney appeared ; and when night came, George and Mr. Mortimer kept awake by turns, so as to prevent a surprise.

It was long past midnight, and the former was sitting beside his sleeping friend, thinking, not of Colney, but of scenes and events far distant, when a strong smell of fire, and the barking of the dogs, aroused him to a remembrance of their present danger. In a very few minutes, the household were all awake, and it was then discovered that an out-building, situated several hundred yards from the house, was in flames. Some valuable goods were stored in it, and Mr. Mortimer was about to issue orders to endeavour to

extinguish them by means of the water in the lake close by, when a sudden thought entered his head, which by no means allayed his discomposure.

“There’s Colney’s hand in that!” said he, aside to George.

“Why so? Ah! I see—to take off our attention, and divide the men.”

“We must let it burn,” said the settler, sadly.

“I fear so; meanwhile, as they are evidently close at hand, could we not steal upon them? and so—”

“We are too few, for some must be left behind to protect the women.”

“They will protect themselves,” interrupted Janet, with flashing eyes. She was standing near her father, and had joined them without their being aware of it. “Do not run any risk by leaving a man behind.”

Two, however, were ordered to remain in the house, whilst the others prepared to meet their enemies at once. It was a bold undertaking, for they knew not the number of

their opponents, nor where exactly they were to be found. The party consisted of Mr. Mortimer, George, a young gentleman of the name of Frank Harcourt (who was visiting at the station, and had only arrived three days before), the two bullock-drivers, and the under stock-keeper; the seventh, though a four-footed animal, deserves to be mentioned, being none other than a favourite dog of Mr. Mortimer's, on whose assistance he relied in tracing the incendiaries. Nor was he deceived: the animal, who was kept from too vigorous proceedings, being held in by a rope, no sooner reached a particular spot near the burning building than he led them into one of the thick groves of trees which environed the station.

“D—the rascals!” muttered young Harcourt to George, “they’ll pepper comfortably at us from behind these trees, and the moon just gives them light enough to aim well.”

But his forebodings were not realised. Rufus led them through the grove, took a

circuitous route, and brought them nearly to the house again.

“ Good Heavens, there they are ! ” ejaculated Mr. Mortimer; and all could distinctly perceive eight or ten dark figures close to the house, evidently consulting which would be the weakest point to assail. So quiet had been our party’s movements, that they were apparently unaware of their being outside, and perhaps imagined that the fire had not roused them.

With cautious steps, and keeping as much as possible in the shadow of the trees, the six advanced, and when within a telling distance, discharged their pieces among the astonished ruffians, who were now between two fires, for the report had brought the anxious inmates to the upper windows, and they, instantly perceiving how matters stood, added their endeavours to those of their companions.

But one course remained for the miscreants, and that was, a desperate retreat. Leaving two—one dead, the other severely

wounded—upon the ground, they rushed precipitately into the forest, firing a parting salute before they did so.

Two or three of the settlers' party received slight wounds; George only was severely injured, and the shot came from Colney. As soon as they had fired their first volley at the bushrangers, they had advanced nearer to them, and the convict immediately recognised the face of his previous adversary. Whilst retreating, he came a few yards closer to them than did his followers, and, taking a pistol from his belt, he deliberately fired at George, and disappeared with the rest. George fell, and at the same moment a scream was heard in the direction of the house, and, for the first time in her life, Janet fainted away.

When restored to herself, her whole thoughts were centred in George, and she soon learnt that he was alive, although not expected to recover. Harcourt had been intended for the medical profession, and had "walked the hospitals," so that George was

better attended than is usually the case so far up the country; and, as Harcourt generally carried his surgical instruments with him, the ball was extracted without much more than ordinary pain or difficulty, but a delirious fever had attacked the patient, and from that danger was to be apprehended.

Better nursing he could not have had, for Janet took that office upon herself, and, unhappily for her, her heart was in the task. As for George, he tossed about on his feverish bed—an imaginary actor in scenes that had long gone by—and ignorant of the anxious eyes, the paling cheek, the quivering lip, with which every stage of his illness was carefully watched.

But he had a thoroughly strong constitution, good nursing, and little physic, so, step by step, he rallied till the danger had passed. The wandering speech had given place to weakness, and Janet felt it better to relinquish her post to the stock-keeper's wife, contenting herself with sitting beside him when he slept, superintending the making of

every attainable delicacy to tempt his appetite; and, when not thus occupied, sitting moodily alone or giving way to impetuous bursts of tears.

And thus week after week went on.

George was now nearly recovered, and passed a considerable portion of the day upon a couch in the principal sitting-room; and Janet, under the pretence of amusing him, and to prevent his over-exerting himself, would sit and read aloud from any fresh book that came into her hands. Sometimes, however, she would let the book fall from her and sink into a deep reverie.

On one of these occasions, George, who felt embarrassed by her silence, inquired whether Colney had yet been captured.

“No,” said Janet, “though a large reward is offered for his apprehension; and it is hoped that one of his followers may betray him.”

“I expect that will be the case ere long; meanwhile, I trust we have seen the last of him.”

“ Oh ! that dreadful night ! ” exclaimed Janet, with heightened colour ; “ never shall I forget the moment when I saw you fall.”

“ And never shall I forget how my kind sister nursed me afterwards,” interrupted George, who was anxious to change the subject.

But Janet was otherwise disposed ; and, therefore, his only resource was to feign fatigue, and close his eyes as if in slumber ; and in reality a dim unconsciousness stole over him, and he was almost asleep when he heard Janet rise, and imagining that she was weary of such bad company, and about to depart, he was on the point of opening his eyes, when a soft touch upon his forehead deterred him. He knew that it was none other than a woman’s hand, and that it could but belong to Janet. He was in an awkward situation : if he showed that he was awake, she would naturally conclude that he had noticed the action ; if he still feigned slumber, she would probably go, and there would the matter end ; that would save trouble and

spare her blushes ; so George, weakened with illness, and glad to escape any exertion, mental or bodily, composed his features and remained motionless.

His irresolution and its termination had occupied only a few moments, and he then again felt the light touch among his hair—a sound like the cutting of a pair of scissars—then a warm breath upon his face—hot lips upon his forehead—retreating steps—a gently closed door—and he felt that he was alone.

For some minutes he hoped that he had been dreaming; but this did not last long, and he thought himself in a most unpleasant predicament. That he admired Janet he was aware; that he loved her—certainly not; yet he had too surely won her affections, and he felt almost like a criminal. This was his return for her father's hospitality and her own unwearied kindness—to destroy the happiness of the home that had sheltered him.

“ I must certainly quit this place imme-

diately," he cogitated; "and yet why? She loves me; and so, perchance, another might have done, could I have felt free to win her; but here, in this wild, unfettered country, they would take me for what I am now, and make no inquiries as to the past; why should I dash away proffered happiness because it is not the happiness on which I have fixed my heart? Yet Emmeline, Emmeline—!" and that name seemed to conjure up so many reminiscences, that Janet and her love were awhile forgotten.

During George's illness and gradual recovery, young Harcourt prolonged his visit at Mr. Mortimer's. At first he had felt strongly inclined to be led captive by Janet's charms; but having, with the freemasonry of youth, made a pretty sure guess as to the state of her heart, he turned his thoughts into another channel. He was seldom in the house: either scouring the country in every direction, or assisting the stock-keepers, or doing anything that was an excuse for being on horseback. He had been intended for the

medical profession; but a legacy of two thousand pounds enabled him to indulge his roaming propensities, and, having no near relatives to grieve for his departure, he determined to emigrate; but was not yet settled, as he was anxious to see colonial life in all its phases, before embarking his capital in any pursuit.

“How far is Colonel Delamere’s station from here?” inquired George, a few mornings after Janet’s secret had been revealed to him.

“A good thirty miles,” replied Mr. Mortimer. “Are you acquainted with him?”

“I knew the family most intimately in England,” said George, who was conscious that Janet’s eyes were fixed searchingly upon his face, “and I ought to have ridden over before; I am strong enough to do so now.”

“Nonsense, man!” cried Mr. Mortimer—
“wait till you’ve ridden only twenty miles, and you’ll tell a different tale; besides, if once you go, we shall never see you back again. But, bless the girl! why, you’ve

been and poured the tea into the sugar-basin, and that's all the white we have left."

"I can find some more," said Janet, glad to escape for a moment.

"But, seriously, my good friend, you must not undertake such a ride just yet, and to-day Mr. Stapleton, our nearest magistrate, is coming over; they've got, I believe, a clue to Colney's retreat, and of course you'll like to hear all about it."

"I have often heard you mention this Mr. Stapleton," said George, who, as Janet had returned, wished to turn the conversation from his own movements; "what sort of a person is he?"

"A very agreeable man among *us*," returned Mr. Mortimer; "but he has one most singular antipathy, which is likely to make him *singular* all his life—he detests the whole race of women."

"What a senseless animal!" ejaculated Frank. "Have you seen this natural curiosity, Miss Mortimer?"

Janet shook her head.

“No; I believe he is never intimate in families where there are young ladies, so of course my Janet was considered too dangerous to encounter.”

In the course of the morning Mr. Stapleton reined up his horse before the house, and, being unable to refuse, dismounted, and was shown into the room where sat Janet and the rest.

He was a tall interesting-looking man of perhaps thirty. He was evidently rather chagrined at the sight of the lady, to whom he bowed stiffly, and instantly plunged into a business conversation with Mr. Mortimer.

“We have succeeded in capturing a man whom we suspect belongs to Colney’s band, but he is so badly wounded that I was forced to leave him at my station, and, if you could ride over so as to identify him with the party who attacked you, I should be very glad.”

“Then suppose we all three come,” said Mr. Mortimer, glancing at George and Harcourt, “for these gentlemen know as much about the bushrangers as myself; in fact, one

of them knows more of their ways than I ever wish to."

After a short delay, therefore, they all started together for Mr. Stapleton's station, which was only five miles distant. After a pleasant ride through a most lovely country, they ascended a rising ground which commanded a good view of the house and adjacent buildings. It was all in a much rougher style than Mr. Mortimer's, for the young magistrate was a newer settler, and had no wife or family to stimulate him to make a comfortable home. The house was built of log—roofed with the thin blocks of wood, the size of slates, which are much used for that purpose all over the colonies, particularly in Melbourne. Doubtless inside it was commodious enough, but, compared to Mr. Mortimer's residence, it looked only fitted for a bachelor in the bush.

"Why, what's the matter?" exclaimed Mr. Stapleton, "there seems something wrong yonder!" and, as they approached nearer, they could perceive a number of figures standing before the door.

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“ I hope it's not the prisoner escaped.”

“ Not very likely, for I left him unable to move ; it's more probably some of his comrades attempting a rescue.”

At the bare idea of this they quickened their pace.

“ It's a woman,” exclaimed Frank, “ and they 're dragging her away.”

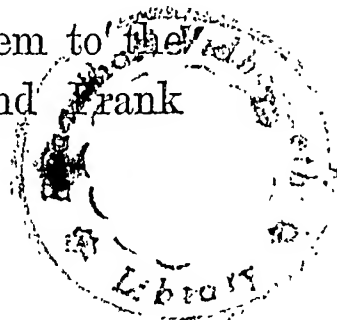
“ A woman !—impossible !—I've only one on my premises, and that 's the old shepherd's wife, and she's such a beauty that no one would run away with her.”

“ It's a young woman, I believe,” cried Frank, who was far ahead of the others, “ and her hair is falling all over her shoulders. Good Heavens ! it can't be—” and without another word he dashed impetuously forward.

“ This is dreadful !” said the horrified magistrate, who appeared more frightened on learning that there was a strange female about his station, than when he had supposed it was the bushrangers themselves.

A smart gallop soon brought them to the scene of action, where they found Frank

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with a sweet pretty girl in his arms, protecting her from three men, who seemed determined to obtain possession of her.

“ Ah, here comes one as will see me righted,” cried the elder of the three—a rough-looking old man, with grey hairs and a red bloated countenance. “ Sir,” addressing the almost stupified Mr. Stapleton, “ you be a magistrate, and that’s my Mary—my daughter; and that d— young scoundrel won’t let me have her.”

“ What in the name of folly brought her here ? ”

“ That I can’t say,” answered the old man, for his daughter had fainted in Harcourt’s arms, “ but have her back I will.”

“ Not for one moment,” cried Frank, pressing his fair burden more closely to himself.

“ Bravo ! spoken like a true gentleman ! ” shouted a fresh voice, and George’s old friend, Tom Nicholls, made his appearance.

“ Your worship, I’ll tell you the exact case. That old man is her father, more the pity, and was my master, for I’ve just dis-

charged myself; and his drinking fits have got worse and worse, and I'll swear Miss Mary's life aint no more safe than a cat's; and he uses her most horribly, he does."

"I can bear testimony to that," said Frank, "and should have spoken to you before, but she made me promise to be silent; doubtless his violence has compelled her to seek your protection as a magistrate."

"What on earth can I do?" asked he, aside, of Mr. Mortimer. "Was ever such an awkward predicament? A young girl—not ugly, too—flying off to me. If I give her up, ten to one he'll half kill her, for I've often heard of him, but couldn't well interfere, with a young woman in the case; but she can't stop here—it's perfectly dreadful."

It was with difficulty that Mr. Mortimer could repress a smile at the magistrate's bewilderment; at length he put an end to his misery by saying—

"Why not let me take possession of her for a time? My Janet will be delighted to have a companion, and we can then, when

she is less agitated, learn more of the matter."

"My dear friend, I don't know how to thank you," shaking Mr. Mortimer most energetically by the hand.

The father, finding it useless to resist, quitted the place in a most fearful rage, followed by his two men.

Tom remained to look after his young mistress, and Mr. Mortimer offered him a berth in his service, which he gladly accepted.

The business that had so opportunely brought them there was soon transacted: the captured man was readily recognised, both by George and Nicholls, as one of those who had attacked them in the forest, and they then proceeded home. Mary, who was weak with agitation and fright, was conveyed in a light cart belonging to Mr. Stapleton.

"I shall ride over to-morrow and inquire into it," were the last words of that gentleman, as they quitted him.

"So you are acquainted with Mary Hal-kin?" asked Mr. Mortimer of Harcourt.

“ Well—a—I met her once; she was sitting crying; I think I consoled her a little, and you know it was only right to call sometimes and see how she was treated.”

“ Her father’s an old ruffian.”

“ So innocently pretty ! ” said Frank.

“ What ? ” and Mr. Mortimer made the bush ring with his laughter.

“ I—I beg your pardon—I didn’t quite understand you.”

“ I was saying her father was an old ruffian.”

“ I should just like to pitch him into the Pacific,” was the energetic reply, leaving no doubt that the speaker knew this time what he was saying.

Janet received her new friend with great kindness, and, discovering that she was the lady-love of Frank, all fears of a rival were allayed. Mary herself was soon quite a new creature — roses bloomed again upon her cheeks; she looked prettier and felt happier than she had done for years.

“ Why, Harcourt, you ’re tired of riding,” often observed his host.

“ You see I ’ve pretty nearly seen every inch of the country, and I ’m having a spell at turning some little things for Miss Mortimer.”

“ Ah ! of course ; young people are the same all the world over.”

George and Janet went on much the same as before : she, either gay with hope, or cast down by uncertainty—he, ever on the lookout for joining Mr. Mortimer out-of-doors, and anxious to depart ; but a new cause prevented him—Colney had resumed his outrages, and he felt bound to give his additional aid in defending the property of his friends, should it be needed.

Meanwhile Mr. Stapleton, extraordinary as it may appear, became a constant visitor. At first it was to receive Miss Halkin’s history of her father’s conduct, which was a painful trial for the poor girl, and one she could never have got over but for Janet’s presence and encouragement. Halkin had

taken to his old habits worse than ever, and his health suffered materially ; so, as he lived nearer to Mr. Stapleton than themselves, he volunteered to bring a constant account of him.

Mary felt much inclined to return to her home, but every one remonstrated with her against such a step. They argued, and justly, that as her influence could not arrest her father's evil habits, and as he had uttered most violent threats against her, she would only uselessly expose herself to insult and injury.

Scarcely a day passed but Mr. Stapleton rode over. He was fond of botany, and a good draughtsman, in both which accomplishments he offered to instruct the young ladies, and this they accepted with pleasure, glad to vary the monotony of bush pursuits.

“ What can have wrought this wonderful change ? ” would Mr. Mortimer ask ; but none could enlighten him.

Very probably Mr. Stapleton could not have analysed it himself ; yet it was strange

how constantly his eye rested upon Janet's figure with an indescribable feeling of satisfaction, how his remarks and conversation appeared specially addressed to her, and how the lightest word she uttered was remembered by him. To a man of Mr. Stapleton's reserved and almost suspicious temperament, Janet had peculiar charms. Her whole thoughts foolishly centred in one whose heart was elsewhere, she quietly repelled the magistrate's advances, and, by repelling, added greater force to his sentiments; for it is a fact, though the softer sex (judging by their actions) appear most lamentably deficient in the knowledge of it, that men—men worth having for husbands—generally prefer to woo, rather than be wooed—to make love, in preference to having it made to them. But this is a dangerous subject, and I shall have bright eyes looking indignantly at these lines.

Meanwhile Frank, particularly during Mr. Stapleton's visits, became exceedingly gloomy in consequence of them. At length he deter-

mined to make a confidant of George, which seemed the wisest thing he could have done, for he thenceforth looked perfectly content and cheerful; from which it may be inferred that George—not being in love, at least with any of the present party—could see a little further than those whose eyes were somewhat blinded by the tender passion.

CHAPTER VI.

COLNEY.

MARY had been about five weeks an inmate of Mr. Mortimer's house, when one evening, as they were all seated beneath the verandah, watching the sun go down behind the tall palm-trees, the sound of a horse's feet, galloping towards the station, arrested their attention; and, before they had time to form any conjectures as to whom the approaching visitor might be, Mr. Stapleton rode up to the door.

"Not a moment is to be lost," cried he; "Colney will be here immediately; get your fire-arms ready, and send the ladies into the house."

These directions were speedily attended to, and they were then informed that Colney and his men had, in broad daylight, burnt down Mr. Stapleton's house, evidently from revenge at his having taken their comrade; for they did not stop to plunder anything, but came on in the direction of Mr. Mortimer's. As Mr. Stapleton had ridden whilst the others were on foot, they had plenty of time to prepare for the assault.

"How many do you think there are?" inquired Harcourt.

"Not less than fifteen: I fear more; but I did not, as you may guess, stay to count them, when I once imagined they were coming here. Luckily, I was not in my house; in fact, no one was inside, and the ruffians only set fire to it and decamped. I came up whilst they were engaged in their work of destruction, and had the pleasure of watching my property being destroyed, without daring to show myself; for what was one against so many? They waited a little while, till the building was fairly in a blaze, and

then started in your direction ; and, as I had overheard your name mentioned, I rode off without a moment's delay, except—”

The dogs here set up a violent barking, and every one was ready to receive the assailants.

Mr. Mortimer's house was built originally of stone ; but a few years ago he had been obliged to make some addition to it, and some rooms had been added at the back, which were principally made of wood. None of the windows commanded the back of the house, which was, however, protected by a high stone wall, which formed the three sides of an enclosed piece of ground, the back of the house forming the fourth side. This yard was used generally as a drying-ground, and to stack a small quantity of wood for every-day use. The only entrance to it was by a door from the house, which was securely barred inside, and considered impregnable.

It was this portion of the building which Colney had determined to attack first. He had made himself, to a great extent, acquainted with the premises ; and, as the bark-

ing of the dogs warned him that the household was aroused to a knowledge of their presence, it was here only that he could dispose of his men without their being exposed to the shots of those inside. As, however, time and secrecy were essentially necessary for his success, he sent eight of his comrades in front, who, concealed among the trees, fired occasionally at the windows, and led Mr. Mortimer and his friends to conclude that they did not feel sufficient confidence to venture upon a closer attack till night-time.

Colney meanwhile had carefully reconnoitred the stone wall, which was ten or twelve feet high, and discovered an iron staple at the top, which had been fixed there at the suggestion of the stock-keeper's wife, who acted as laundress, for the purpose of attaching a line on which to hang her clothes to dry; and, as Colney had brought a few yards of rope with him, everything seemed to favour his plan. Flinging this rope adroitly, so that it might be caught by the staple, he gained an easy means of ascending, which he

did, followed by ten others, and with little difficulty they found themselves within the enclosure. Colney now attempted to push open the door, which I have mentioned as being in the wooden wall of the house, and the only means of communication with the yard into which they had gained admittance. Colney had calculated on finding the door only simply fastened, and he was enraged at discovering that to open it was beyond his strength. His eye fell upon the heap of dry wood, and he instantly commenced piling it up outside.

“I fancy I hear some strange sounds at the back,” said Frank; “is there a possibility of some of the rascals being there?”

“I think it’s impossible,” returned Mortimer, “for I don’t see how they could surmount that wall; and, even did they manage that, the door is well secured.”

“There’s some stratagem at work,” observed Mr. Stapleton; “Colney’s not the man to station his followers there, doing nothing but expend powder and shot on our windows.”

Mr. Mortimer left his post to see if any attempt was being made at the back of the house.

“It’s a horrid bore there being no windows overlooking the yard : how I could have had it built so, I can’t imagine.”

“You didn’t expect the present visit,” was on George’s lips, but the sight that met their eyes horrified him too much to speak.

Nearly all of the newly built portion of the house was in flames ; and, above the noise of the fast-increasing fire, they could hear the voice of Colney encouraging his ruffian band to take advantage of the confusion, and rush at once upon the settlers.

Considering that the flames would partly die away when they encountered the solid stone wall of the original building, Mr. Mortimer thought it best to retreat to the front apartments, and, in the event of Colney’s men rushing in upon them, meet them with ready loaded weapons. They took up their stand therefore outside the sitting-room, where the females in the house were as-

sembled. This room was comparatively safe, for substantial shutters had been put up against the windows, and mattresses inside, so that no harm could enter that way ; whilst it was only across the bodies of their defenders that the ruffians could obtain an entrance through the door of the apartment.

The struggle for life soon commenced. As Mr. Mortimer expected, the lack of combustible material considerably diminished the force of the fire, and Colney readily persuaded the misguided men to follow him.

It was a hard struggle : the convicts were in greater number, and were all strong-built, desperate men ; and their leader was a formidable enemy alone ; but the settlers were better armed, and were fighting, not only for life, but for those they loved.

If the moments appeared awful to those engaged in the conflict, to the women it was agony in the extreme. They could hear shouts and imprecations and groans, a few yards from them, and were ignorant of who, perhaps, was dying, and what their own fate might be. To Janet, this suspense, this igno-

rance, was an indescribable torture; she determined to end it, and see at once the worst: her stake in the struggle was a double one: she trembled for her father—and for him she loved.

She unfastened the door, and, opening it a few inches, gazed at the scene.

Her eye first fell upon her father, who, partly concealed by an abutment in the wall, was reloading his pistols: the others seemed engaged in close conflict; but them she scarcely noticed, for she saw George at the mercy of Colney. He had pinned his enemy against the wall, and, with the help of a comrade, prevented George from getting free. In one uplifted hand he held a knife, ready to strike into his heart. Janet saw it flash as the light of the mouldering flames fell on it; she could hear the word “revenge” burst from Colney’s lips: another moment, and she would have been too late. She firmly grasped a small pistol which she had secured some time before: it was aimed by a hand made steady by desperation, and Colney’s arm was powerless for ever.

Dismayed at the fall of his leader, the other let go his hold, and George, wrenching the knife from the convict's lifeless hand, vigorously attacked his other assailant. They were all panic-struck at the death of Colney, but received a fresh encouragement from the arrival of the men whom he had placed outside, and who had taken advantage of the inhabitants of the house leaving the windows to force open the front entrance. Meanwhile the flames at the back of the house were slowly making way, and the settlers appeared doomed to destruction.

At that moment the tramp of horses' feet and the exclamations of strange voices made every heart beat with alternate hope and fear. Were they friends or foes? The attempted flight of the convicts who were nearest to the entrance quickly satisfied Mr. Mortimer's party, whilst it filled the others with consternation. Three surrendered themselves; two were shot whilst endeavouring to escape, and the remainder succeeded in gaining the bush.

The attention of all was now directed to the wounded and to the burning house. The former were conveyed outside, and given up to the care of Frank, Janet, and her companions; and the fire, with much labour, was at length extinguished.

When something like order had been restored, recognitions were interchanged between the new arrivals and those they had assisted to save. Among the former George discovered his old friend, Colonel Delamere.

“What, you in Australia!” said he; “how long have you been here?”

George told him.

“Yet we have not seen you, though you must have known we were only thirty miles off. There, no excuses. I can forgive you, considering the inducement to remain where you are;” and he glanced, laughingly, at Janet, who was assisting the stock-keeper’s wife to bind up a wound he had received.

“She saved my life;” and George recounted the incident.

To explain the arrival of Colonel Delamere

and his ten well-armed companions, we must go back to the time when Mr. Stapleton left his own blazing station to forewarn his friends. On his road he had met one of his own men, whom he had charged to scour the country and bring assistance to Mr. Mortimer. This man had accordingly gone to the nearest station; and, as the settlers in the neighbourhood were unanimously of the opinion that the only way to rid their part of the country of Colney's band was by making a united stand against them, he soon got together a number sufficient to overawe the convicts. Colonel Delamere, who was passing the night at a place about eight miles distant, also joined them.

"Well; ride over to us to-morrow morning," said he, when George had ceased talking of Janet, "and I will find a surprise for you. And you, Mr. Mortimer, pack off your young ladies the first thing in the morning for the next two months, whilst your house is getting to rights again."

And to this invitation the Colonel would

take no denial, so it was arranged as he wished.

“I cannot sleep,” said George; “let us walk up and down here till dawn: perhaps those rascals will reappear.”

“Not now,” answered Colonel Delamere; “I think we may look upon the whole band as dispersed, since the head of it is gone.”

“You will laugh at me when I confess,” pursued George, “that I feel a certain degree of admiration for that Colney. Had he been a great general, and burnt down towns instead of stations, or murdered a thousand in the place of one, should we not have called him a hero, and named his ferocity, courage?”

“Probably,” replied the Colonel, “if Colney had been differently educated, he would have become a blessing instead of a curse to his fellows. He possessed great personal bravery, energy, and a strange power over others. Not one of his followers—convicts, ruffians that they were—would ever, I firmly believe, have betrayed him. He was persevering, and with no small amount of natural

ability; yet, with these gifts, what has he been?—A misery to himself—a source of terror to others.”

“I should like to know something of his past history.”

“I can supply you with a few facts,” said Mr. Stapleton, who had walked by their side listening to, though not before joining in, their conversation. “He was transported, I think, ten years ago for burglary. His first crime was poaching. He said that his mother, who was sick and old, and dependent upon him, was dying; and he, having been out of work, had not a farthing to buy a meal with: he killed a hare—it was discovered, and he was imprisoned. During his confinement he made many determinations for the future: he would begin life afresh, and struggle against temptation. His term of punishment expired, and he returned home. Home!—he had none; his mother had died, and been buried by the parish; and who would employ a lad fresh from prison? He became desperate, as thousands have done before him:

it is a tale of every day. He felt that all were against him; he had nothing to hope if he resisted temptation; little to fear if he gave way to it. When he landed in the colony he again thought to begin life anew; but it was more difficult now—the lad had become a man; and, whilst the good in him had been destroyed, the evil had been matured. Unfortunately, too, the master to whom he had been assigned was, to say the least, an injudicious one: he had other servants, free men, and bickerings and jealousies became common. The mistress, unhappily, showed her dislike to the convict in many marked ways; the most disagreeable duties were allotted to him, and he rebelled. I happened to be visiting the magistrate before whom he was taken, and thus I learnt what I have told you. I strongly gave my opinion against the corporal punishment to which Colney was sentenced, but it was of no avail: the lashes were inflicted; the man was returned to his master; and, as I feared, he took his revenge, and added murder to his

other crimes. The sequel you know—he took to the bush, collected other escaped convicts around him, and now has died a violent death, and rushed into his Maker’s presence whilst in the act of sin.”

“Although, as you say, an every-day story, it is none the less one of deep interest to us all. To trace the germ of that which ripened into sin we must go back to the uneducated childhood of Colney; and in those two words, ‘uneducated childhood,’ we find the root of the evil. He may have been able to read and write, and much more; I do not call that education; it is but a part of a whole; he had evidently received neither religious, moral, nor mental training; even in his first offence this is evident, and more so on his return from prison; he had no hope beyond the present world; no idea of his individual responsibility to his Maker; no anchor on which to lean in the moment of temptation; and we should feel more sorrow than surprise at his fall.”

“True, Colonel, but how to make people

understand that full ninety cases of crime out of one hundred arise from want of education? and that a government which does not compel parents to educate their children, becomes morally responsible for the result?"

"I know not, except by appealing to the pocket; pounds, shillings, and pence, are in great consideration now-a-days. Take Colney, for instance; put on one side the amount of property he has destroyed—the lives he has taken we cannot calculate—the cost of his imprisonments, trials, transportation, etc.; add to this the value of his labour lost to society during the time he has passed in crime, and against this put the cost of a religious, sound, practical education, and which would be the least expense to the country?"

But we must not forget Janet; so we will leave our settlers discussing a subject which has puzzled many a wiser head than their own, and give one peep at her before she lies down to rest.

"I shall never forget to-night," murmured

George, pressing Janet's hand, as she, having done all in her power for the wounded, retired to sleep awhile.

And Janet sat in her room, which had escaped injury from the fire, thinking over these words, whilst a new and delicious hope filled her heart. She heard the regular breathing of Mary, who slept soundly; she could catch the measured steps of her father's guests, as they walked to and fro outside; sometimes even she could distinguish their voices, and the deep rich tones of *one* would bring the warm blood mantling to her face. Night passed away, the eastern clouds became streaked with red, and the first ray of sunshine fell upon her face, and lost itself amid her long dishevelled hair, yet there she sat, dreaming of happiness and forgetful of fatigue.

Mary moved restlessly, and opened her eyes.

"It will be day before you get any rest, dear Janet; why are you waiting there?" and before she could receive an answer, the

fair head was once more laid upon the pillow, and Mary was asleep again.

Janet rose and threw herself down beside her friend, and soon her eyelids drooped heavily, her thoughts became confused, and in her dreams she again heard the voice she loved so well; and the images that floated in her imagination became as bright and radiant as the sunshine that streamed upon her face.

CHAPTER VII.

Orange Blossoms.

THAT which Emmeline had promised by the deathbed of the unfortunate mother, she determined to fulfil. For the present she thought it best to leave the little boy at Widow Larkins's, till she had had time to reflect on what plan to adopt with him. But she was soon compelled to find herself a fresh home. Robert offered her his hand, and she refused it. This so astounded him that he felt far more anger at the slight than sorrow because his love was not returned ; and Mrs. James soon discovered the event and its effects upon him ; her aim in life was to stand

well with her bachelor brother-in-law, so Emmeline received a cold dismissal.

For this she was not wholly unprepared; ever since the little Georgy had been confided to her care, she had meditated over a proposal which she had received soon after her father's death. It came from a maiden lady who had been for years a friend of her mother. She kept a preparatory boys' school, near Bath; and, aware that Emmeline's education had been one that well fitted her for the post, she offered her a home and liberal salary as her assistant. When this proposal reached her, Emmeline was at Moorlands, and she accordingly declined it; but ever since the death of Georgy's mother, she had been wishing for what she had before refused. Mrs. James's dismissal left her at liberty to write to that effect to her friend, and the reply was most satisfactory. So Emmeline bade adieu to Moorlands, and with her *protégé* set out for Bath.

Tears streamed down her face as she gave a last look to Moorlands—tears of sorrow and

of joy, for she had experienced the extremes of both during her short residence there. One source of misery had been taken away since she had stood beside the dying woman : she had learnt there that she had not loved in vain ; that, even if now forgotten, he had loved her once, and that thought alone was happiness ; and not only was one sorrow gone, but another comfort was given to her ; and as, day after day, she discovered greater resemblance in the open, expressive face, that had already learnt to glow with pleasure at her approach, to the father who had perhaps forgotten his existence, she thanked God for having sent her some being on earth to live for and to love.

Five months rolled pleasantly away, and then Emmeline received a letter from Australia : it had been forwarded on to her from Moorlands.

The direction was in a lady's handwriting ; she impatiently tore it open ; scanned the pages till she reached the signature, and then learnt that it was from Mrs. Delamere.

That lady informed her that her two eldest daughters had lately married, and that, her own health having become very indifferent, she was desirous to persuade Emmeline to join her in Australia, and take the charge of her younger children, as the lady who was her present governess was engaged to be married, and would only remain four months longer with her. She apologised for making the offer, but excused herself on the plea that she had observed her much before she left England, and wished to secure the society of one who would be an invaluable addition to her family.

Emmeline pondered deeply over the letter. She well remembered Mrs. Delamere, who had been a constant visitor at Moorlands, as a good-natured, delicate, and rather indolent lady; and for many reasons she felt disposed to accept the offer. The terms were very liberal, but that was not the greatest consideration: it was of little George's future that she thought. It had often caused her deep anxiety: she looked to the time when

he must enter the world, and struggle, not only without position or means, but with a stain upon his mother's character; and this opening in a new country, where a man was esteemed for *himself*, seemed a solution to all her fears. She decided to go. Mrs. Delamere had enclosed her a letter to her lawyer in London, requesting him to hand over the necessary funds, in case Emmeline should determine to leave England; so that no difficulties beset her.

They arrived in Sydney, and proceeded on to Colonel Delamere's station; and little did she imagine that George was located so near her, for no thought of meeting him had influenced her decision; she would, on little Georgy's account, have been most pleased had she been aware of it.

As the young ladies were rather later than usual the morning following Colney's attack, Colonel Delamere bade Mr. Mortimer farewell, and rode on before "to inform his

‘women-folk’ of their coming visitors,” leaving George and Frank to escort them.

Now, the Colonel’s station was not more than twenty-five miles from Mr. Mortimer’s, though they all persisted in magnifying it, into thirty, so a three hours’ ride brought him home. His family had not been alarmed at his absence, as they had expected business would detain him over the night; but when he proceeded to narrate all that had happened, their wonder knew no bounds. On the mention of George’s name, Emmeline’s colour rose, and her heart beat wildly with a thousand conflicting emotions; but when he spoke of Janet—of her beauty, of her heroism, of her nursing him through illness, of her saving his life, of their evident attachment, and, most probably, their engagement—then all colour forsook her cheeks, her heart appeared to become lifeless, and she sat immoveable as a statue—each word that fell upon her ear sounding like the knell of her future happiness.

At length she found strength to totter from the room, and seek refuge in solitude.

A little before sunset, Janet and Mary arrived with their attendant cavaliers. Emmeline had conquered herself, and had even assisted in arranging everything for the reception and comfort of her whom she forced herself to look upon, not as her rival, but as her cousin's bride. At the sight of George, however, she forgot everything but himself, and advanced eagerly to meet him. He started back amazed; for Colonel Delamere, who thought his surprise would be a good joke, had not enlightened him; and Emmeline instantly checked herself, and received him with a coldness and hauteur she had never before assumed.

"Let me introduce Miss Mortimer to you," said he, glad of anything to conceal his confusion. "This is my cousin Emmeline."

"Emmeline!" ejaculated Janet, turning pale; but she quickly recovered her self-possession, and her sudden agitation was attributed to the excitement she had so lately gone through.

"George has introduced us rather in-

formally to one another," said she; "but I seem to have known you before."

"Indeed!" said Emmeline; she hardly knew what word came from her lips: all she heard, all she thought of, was that term, "George"; ignorant that they had called one another by their Christian names, in a brother-and-sister fashion, from almost the first day of their acquaintance.

"Yes," pursued Janet, fixing her searching eyes upon the pale face before her; "George often—"

At this moment Emmeline felt her arm placed within another's, and herself drawn gently but forcibly away.

"Emmeline," said George, for it was he; "Emmeline, forgive my rudeness in dragging you from Miss Mortimer; but had I known you were here, I should have found my way to Colonel Delamere's long ago."

"They would have been delighted to have seen a friend from England," was her reply: that "George" rang in her ears and blinded her eyes.

Her cousin was evidently chagrined: he dropped the hand that he had seized, and kept beside Janet for the remainder of the evening.

As Colonel Delamere's house was not large, Janet and Emmeline occupied the same apartment. A little bed in one corner contained the younger children, whilst Georgy slept in a little crib beside his "dear sister," as he called her.

The children were all sound asleep, and Emmeline herself was in a pleasant state of forgetfulness, when Janet rose and came to her side.

"I fear you are not comfortable, Miss Mortimer—"

"I can't sleep; I must talk to you. How I have hated your very name!" and with a sudden revulsion of feeling Janet threw herself upon Emmeline's neck and burst into tears.

"You are excited with the horrors of last night," said she, trying to soothe her.

"No," cried Janet, "not that; I only

wish that I were dead: it is a wretched life I have to look forward to." And then into the astonished ear of Emmeline she poured forth the history of her love; of the hopes and fears that had agitated her, and now of her certainty of misery.

"Even when he was delirious, and spoke only of 'Emmeline,' and forgot my existence, I did not despair. I detested you, but feared you not, for oceans rolled between you—and I hoped; but, now that I have seen you, I can hate you no longer; and can I wonder that, loving *you*, I am nothing in his sight? Had I wanted proof of his feelings, that look of sorrow, when you repulsed him this evening, would have been sufficient. Do not interrupt me. It is *not* love he feels for me; at the most, gratitude and a brother's affection; he never professed more: it is I who have deceived myself;" and again Janet gave way to tears.

Pride enabled her to conquer them.

"You will wonder that I make you the confidante of such a love as mine, but it is not

a selfish one : only you can make him happy—do not let Janet Mortimer be a cause of misunderstanding ;” and, abruptly pressing her lips to those of Emmeline, she left her.

It was hours ere Emmeline slept ; at first her own happiness, mingled with admiration for her rival, kept her from slumber ; but to this succeeded one great cause of anxiety—Georgy. On her first arrival at Colonel Delamere’s, Emmeline had acquainted Mrs. Delamere with all she knew of his history, with one reservation—the name of his father. She had intended to place him at school in Sydney, but Mrs. Delamere so opposed it, and took such a fancy to the boy, that he always remained among her own children ; now, however, Emmeline wished that she had fulfilled her original intention, for, whilst she desired that George should see his son, she shrank from the task of relating to him, not only the particulars of his wife’s death, but her own care of the child, which might appear a tacit reproach for his neglect of him. However, she determined to let events take their course.

"Where is Emmeline?" was George's inquiry, in the course of the morning.

"With the children, I expect," said Mrs. Delamere; "they generally make their schoolroom out-of-doors this fine weather."

But before she had concluded her sentence, George made his exit, and, guided by the sound of childish voices, soon discovered his cousin and her pupils.

"I thought Colonel Delamere had no boys so young as this," observed George, placing his hand on the child's curly head.

Emmeline coloured crimson; she felt that she ought to acquaint him with his wife's death, but the explanation was a difficult one, and she knew not how to commence.

George wondered at her confusion, and glanced from her to the child, but without the slightest suspicion of the truth.

"What is his name?"

Emmeline hesitated, and the boy answered for her—

"Georgy Witherby," said he.

It was his mother's name—the one he had

been always called, and which Emmeline, not thinking to meet her cousin, had never changed.

The whole truth flashed upon him—

“ Send them away, Emmeline. Now, tell me exactly how you met with that child; don’t spare me—I don’t deserve it.”

She told the story in a few words and with a trembling voice. When she ceased, it was in a tone of concentrated wretchedness that he spoke.

“ Emmeline, you have acted like an angel—like yourself; and I have dared to love you—to hope that some day I might be worthy to win your love. You know now the cause of my strange conduct at Moorlands. I tried to conquer a love that was unworthy of its object: I fled from you, but too late for my own peace; and, now that you have learnt my past misdeeds, think of me with pity—we may never meet again.”

He glanced at her face—tears were silently falling from her eyes, her lips quivered, and,

as she was about to turn away, he caught her in his arms.

“I deserve never to be happy again,” cried he; “yet I do believe—” but, from some unknown cause, he never finished the sentence—but drew her to his side upon the rustic bench, and there they remained for such an unconscionable time, that little Georgy, dismayed at this fresh rival, yet not daring to approach them, ran into the house to inform Mrs. Delamere that “that new gentleman was stealing away his sister”; with which piece of information Mrs. Delamere doubtless was extremely edified.

Janet that day electrified her father by expressing a wish to visit some friends in Sydney; and, as her desires were law, she soon bade farewell to the bush, to the dismay of Mr. Stapleton.

Three months after this, Emmeline and George were married, and, at the same time, Mary became Mrs. Harcourt. Her father had died a week after the attack on Mor-

timer's house, in a fit brought on by the life he led, so that the Harcourts settled in the close neighbourhood of their friends, for Colonel Delamere had taken George into partnership with himself.

About three years ago, Mrs. James Silvester received a long letter from Australia, of which I subjoin two or three extracts:—

“ My dear Cousin,

“ We are exceedingly concerned to hear of your late severe losses in business, and are constantly regretting to one another that Robert should have left his fortune to comparative strangers, when it would have been so useful to yourselves. * * * *

“ I am glad that you think of emigrating; and, if you have really courage to undertake the journey, we both say—come by all means; and do not let Georgina's delicate health deter you, as the sea air will be beneficial, and this climate is remarkably healthy; besides, I will spare you my head nurse,

a good, trustworthy widow, named Larkins, who used to live in one of that row of cottages near Moorlands. * * *

“ We have just had a very gay wedding here; nearly every one within forty miles was invited. The bride was the young lady who once saved George’s life, and the gentleman is a magistrate of this part; it has been a long courtship on his side, but is now happily terminated. The bride is a noble, high-spirited girl, a dear friend of mine; so you see we can find you plenty of neighbours if you come. * * * * *

“ George unites with me in the hope that we may soon welcome you to Australia; and believe me,

“ Your affectionate cousin,

“ EMMELINE.”

SUBSTANCE AND SHADOW.

“WELL, Lewis, I can’t force you to relinquish this foolish plan,” said Mr. Markham to his only son, “but I think it perfect madness, nevertheless. You’re giving up certainty for uncertainty, my boy, indeed you are, and breaking your mother’s heart into the bargain!”

“Wait till I come home with boxes full of nuggets, and purchase the Grange back again.”

“Will that bring your mother from her grave, when she has died of grief at your departure?”

“Oh! of course she’ll be sorry to lose

me, but women soon get over these things; and it's so foolish of her to think there's any danger—the voyage is safe enough, and a six-barrelled revolver will make the bush-rangers keep their distance.”

“ But your health, Lewis; you've never been accustomed to hardships. Think of sleeping without shelter; bad food, and little of it; hard work, wearing to body and spirits; rough associates; and all, perhaps, for nothing.”

“ You forget the climate, my dear sir—healthy and salubrious; and how can there be a deficiency of food, with kangaroos, etc., only waiting to be cooked? As for hard work, though I certainly have never yet tried it, you forget how I excel in boating, gymnastics, and a hundred other fatiguing things. I can't believe that digging will be worse.”

“ All very fine!—tiring yourself for two or three hours as an amusement, and having to labour all day and every day for your very food, will not bear comparison.”

“ Well, well, it’s no use arguing about it, my mind’s made up, and go I will. I must break through this detestable life—slaving at a desk from morning till night, and making little more a year than we need, even for our economical style of living.”

“ Slow and sure,” observed Mr. Markham.

“ *Slow*, no doubt!” returned Lewis, sarcastically, “ for it’s fourteen years since we lost the Grange, and I see little chance of our ever repossessing it; but as to it’s being *sure*, I doubt it. Now, my plan is certain of success; look at the papers—at the last accounts—they beat California hollow; it’s enough to drive one mad that one is not there already.”

“ Your poor mother,” sighed the father.

“ You must break it to her, and the sooner I’m off the better; the excitement of my going will prevent her brooding over it, and in less than two years I shall be back with a fortune. You’d better please tell her of my determination as soon as possible,” added he, as he quitted the room, and left his father absorbed in his own painful ruminations.

Lewis Markham was an only child—almost the greatest misfortune that could have befallen him. Idolised by his parents, brought up in the greatest luxury, he became the most perfect little tyrant in petticoats and long curls that his foolish mother's over-indulgence was calculated to make him. When about ten years old, severe and sudden losses compelled his father to give up horses, carriages, and a large establishment, and sell the pretty country house where their forefathers had been born and lived for centuries. With the small residue of the capital obtained by the sale of the estate he entered as junior partner into a commercial house in the town of B—.

Lewis was of an age to feel this deeply; pampered, obeyed, accustomed to tyrannise over all around him, the change was to him a new existence. Unfortunately he derived no wholesome lesson from it: for his parents, to make up for the many indulgences his altered position compelled him to forego, humoured and spoilt him the more, until

at length they were about to reap the bitter harvest of their own folly. Yet even now, when his determination of going to the diggings was diametrically opposed to their own expressed wishes, they were as ready to palliate his faults as they had been when he was a wayward urchin, years ago ; so that, after Mrs. Markham had recovered her first surprise and sorrow, she busied herself in all maternal preparations for his comfort, whilst his father secured a comfortable cabin in a first-class vessel, wrote to every friend whom he imagined had connections in Australia for letters of introduction, and spared neither money nor trouble for his son's benefit. During the time that these preparations were rapidly going on, they congratulated one another that, even in this erratic step, their "noble boy" thought only of nuggets for the sake of restoring to them the old Grange.

And what were Lewis's ideas upon that subject? Very different to what they expected. He certainly wished the Grange to be again in the possession of his family,

but not for his parents, nor exactly for himself, but for a certain Kathleen Lorimer, the *belle* of B—.

Although an undisputed *belle*, Kathleen had all the wit, beauty, and accomplishments, without the vanity, coquetry, the flirting, and fortune or title hunting propensities, which are more often than otherwise the accompaniments of *belleship*. She was an heiress as well as a beauty, which doubtless in many eyes greatly added to her attractions; but, to do Lewis justice, it was herself he loved, and had she been less wealthy he would have loved her as deeply — certainly with less misery to himself, as there would have been fewer difficulties to surmount before he could ask her hand. At times he felt sorely tempted to pour his passionate feelings into her ear, for there was a look in Kathleen's gentle eyes which induced him to hope that she would not be offended beyond forgiveness did he avow his attachment. Pride withheld him. None should be able to hint that his love for the fair beauty was but a

feint to gain possession of her wealth. No ! though never, perhaps, her equal in that, he would, at least, be more than a mere clerk before he asked her to be his wife.

So he went to the diggings.

Kathleen Lorimer was an orphan, and, having attained her majority—which by her father's will was fixed at eighteen—she was more completely her own mistress than often falls to the lot of women. Her mother and Mrs. Markham had been old and dear friends, and whilst they resided at the Grange, much of Kathleen's childhood had been spent there. At the time of their troubles she was too young and powerless to afford them any assistance, and when old enough to offer it, Mr. Markham's pride made him steadily refuse ; so she was compelled to limit herself to constant little kindnesses to Mrs. Markham, which that lady received with great pleasure, considering them as originating in affection for Lewis, though no supposition could be further from the truth. The young people, however, were thus constantly thrown toge-

ther, and the partial mother looked upon Kate as her daughter, for that any one could remain untouched by her son's perfections was a problem that Mrs. Markham would have found difficult to unravel.

The voyage—with its sea-sickness, discomforts, friendships, and quarellings—was over; and Lewis was in Australia. There are always plenty of parties going up to the gold-fields: he contrived to get introduced to one proceeding to Ballarat, and was allowed to join it. They conveyed themselves to Geelong by steamer, and from thence, after sixty miles of rough travelling, they reached their destination.

It was fine weather—the middle of October, 1852—and this, united with the excitement of the novel scene, made Lewis laugh over the work of erecting tents and settling themselves comfortably. Next morning, licenses were procured, and work commenced. Lewis did his best, though he soon found that his rougher companions could do more with less labour than himself; but he

determined to persevere. Meanwhile, the holes were growing deeper, and the work harder: fifty feet, and no gold; sixty, seventy feet, and they reached the bottom, and found nothing.

“Try again,” said they, Lewis and all; and they did so, with the same result, a third and a fourth time. The health of Lewis was giving way; for, in spite of his boasted skill at gymnastics, he was anything but strong: and his father’s words often recurred to him, that to labour hard all and every day was a different thing to boating or cricketing for a few hours. He gave up writing home, for his pride forbade him to speak of his disappointments, and say that digging for gold was too much for him.

He now determined to trade with goods from Melbourne to Bendigo, and altogether leave Ballarat, the scene of the first downfall of his golden visions. In this project he was joined by one of the party, who, like himself, had no taste for hard work. Arrived in Melbourne, he expended all his remaining capital,

with the exception of a few pounds, in a dray and bullocks, with a cargo of all descriptions of articles suited for a Bendigo store. His mate furnished little capital, but counter-balanced this, he explained to Lewis, by his knowledge of the roads, managing bullock-drays, and bargaining with storekeepers; and Lewis soon found, that, as regarded the second of these considerations, his companion was correct. He had no idea what taking a dray up the country was, and had fancied that any one who could drive well in England would be qualified for a bullock-driver in Australia. He was soon practically convinced to the contrary.

Not far from the Porcupine Inn (eighteen miles from Bendigo), whilst endeavouring to manage the unruly animals, he severely sprained his knee, and was unable to proceed further.

At the suggestion of his comrade, he remained at the Porcupine whilst the other proceeded on the road, with a promise of disposing of the goods and returning to him

as quickly as possible; the empty dray would then, if he were unable to walk, convey him to Melbourne.

Week after week he awaited there, and no Jenkins re-appeared; all sorts of disagreeable suspicions passed through his mind, which his landlord (on Lewis asking his opinion and advice) confirmed.

“ You need never expect to see Jenkins, dray, bullocks, or goods again ! ” and, unpleasant as it seemed, Lewis was compelled to believe that this unpalatable opinion was too true.

He determined to hunt out his deceitful mate; but very soon common sense told him that the diggings, with its thousands of inhabitants, was the last place to find any one. After paying his bill, he had but between two and three sovereigns left; so he determined to return to Melbourne at once.

The first evening he rested not far from Five-mile Creek; and the next morning, screwed up his courage to pass alone through the Black Forest, for, unfortunately, he had

not been able to join any party going that way.

After walking four or five miles amid its dark and dreary mazes, he observed two suspicious-looking characters walking in a parallel line with himself, with only a few trees between. He instinctively knew that they were bushrangers, and, not being anxious for the honour of their company, turned off into a path that led from them. Hardly had he taken a dozen steps in that direction than "bail up" in a rough voice, and the click of a pistol, made him think it advisable to pause. One glance told him there was no hope, for in front of him he spied through the openings between the trunks of the trees, two or three more men of the same description as the first. What he had to lose was little enough, and it was not for that he cared; but he was aware that, when thus disappointed, they seldom spared the lives of their victims. The utmost resistance that he could offer was slight against so many, and he was soon overpowered. His fears seemed likely to be

realised, when, after having rifled him of the little he possessed, the most savage-looking of them exclaimed, with a running accompaniment of oaths,

“ I told you he'd not be worth catching, or he wouldn't have come here alone ; there, send a bullet through his head, and put the wretch out of his misery.”

“ And so save our time,” rejoined another.

“ No, no,” cried a third, “ what's the good of killing the poor devil ? ”

“ Dead men tell no tales.”

“ He sha'nt tell no tales, nor be killed neither. Tie him fast to this here tree, and summun'll find him in a day or two.”

This was Lewis's fate, and hour after hour he remained without food, without water, his limbs fettered, and no prospect of aid ; for in so large a tract as the Black Forest, none might take that identical route until his bones alone were left to tell that a human being had perished there.

But relief came. After nearly two days of protracted misery, a party of returning dig-

gers, with light hearts and full pockets, saw and released him. They gave him every assistance towards returning to Melbourne, which he at length reached—a weary, disappointed man.

He tried many things: storeman, porter, wood-cutter, working, even, on the roads, but it was gradually undermining his health, and he heartily repented having ever left England.

A fresh opening appeared. A gentleman, about to open an agency-office in Collins Street, wanted a clerk to be always on the premises and attend to the business. Lewis applied for the situation, and obtained it at a salary of £3 a week, and the use of a little room at the back of the office. With rising spirits he entered upon his new engagement. At first he had little to do, then less and less; and, what annoyed him more, Mr. D., after paying him regularly for two weeks, was obliged to let his salary run on for a little time. It ended in Mr. D.'s running off, and poor Lewis again seeking for employment.

Now, deeply did he regret that, in the

exuberance of his self-confidence on landing, he had destroyed the many good letters of introduction with which he had been furnished by his father. In a strange country, unknown, and with several small debts upon him (for during the last few weeks of Mr. D.'s administration he had been obliged to beg for credit to obtain the very necessities of life), his only resource was to dispose of the little property he still possessed. And, as he looked over the liberal supply of articles for use and comfort with which his indulgent mother had supplied him, he, for the first time, perhaps, during the whole course of his life, fully appreciated her kindness. How his heart yearned towards home; but oceans were between, and how was he, who had not wherewithal to live, to pay his passage back?

In disposing of the few things he possessed, Lewis found—what many emigrants, to their great surprise and distress, have discovered—that although *to buy*, everything was at an exorbitant price, the things he offered *for sale* went for almost nothing.

After two or three months of trouble and despair, he received a letter from England in an unknown hand. It was long since he had heard from home, and longer still since he had written ; he felt almost afraid to break the seal.

The letter was a short one—"Your mother will die if you do not return ; enclosed are the means for doing so." A bill for £100 was inside.

"And for this I left home !" murmured Lewis, as he read the few lines again and again, in the futile hope of discovering whence they came. "But I can at least obey the summons."

He lost no time in leaving Australia, where he had passed eight of the most wretched months of his existence, and in five more he arrived in England.

He hastened to B —, to his father's house. It was closed, and the ominous words, "To let," were in the windows. He repaired to the house of business, but it was after hours, and closed for the night.

This suspense was awful; he was distracted, and knew not where to turn for information; several friends passed him, but in the half light, and himself so altered, he was not recognised. At last, driven to desperation, he accosted one, introducing himself by name. Mr. S— drew him under the nearest lamp, eagerly scanned his features, then shook him warmly by the hand, and congratulated him on his return to England and his father's repossession of the Grange.

“The Grange!” muttered Lewis, almost stunned for the moment.

“Bless me, my dear fellow, didn't you know! Let me explain,” which, without waiting for a reply from the agitated Lewis, he accordingly did; but, as his statement was a very roundabout one, we will, in a few words, give a concise and simple account of the changes that had taken place during the absence of Lewis.

A few months before his return, a difficulty had occurred in the business of which his father was a partner, which only the immediate

possession of an amount of ready money could enable the house to overcome. Although a large amount of capital was afloat, there was none that could be called in without considerable loss, whilst it was desirable, for the credit of the house, to avoid borrowing, if possible. In this emergency, Mr. Markham brought forward the sum, which, during fourteen years, he had gradually accumulated by strict economy, in the hope that, in his old age, the property of his family might again become his. This money, small sum as it was, enabled them to pass safely through the crisis which brought many others in B— into the *Gazette*. Not long after, the principal partner died; he was an old man, with no relatives, and, by a first will, the great bulk of his possessions had been left to various charities; but Mr. Markham's conduct had so touched his heart (for the credit of the house was his first earthly thought), that he left his share in the business, and considerable property besides, to the father of Lewis. Mr. Markham's first act was to regain the Grange.

When there, the sight of the well-remembered rooms—where still hung the very curtains behind which her darling boy had often hidden from her in play—recalled Lewis so vividly to his mother, that his absence and continued silence preyed upon her mind, and brought her to the brink of the grave. All that physicians could do was done; but it is beyond their power to cure a broken heart, and for her there seemed no hope.

Kathleen was her ministering angel; she could comfort her, she could listen patiently for hours to stories about Lewis, and she became the greatest solace the invalid enjoyed—cheerfully relinquishing the pleasures and gaiety with which her beauty and wealth could have surrounded her, for the sake of cheering the sad life of her mother's friend.

As soon as Lewis could tear himself from his friend, he was on the road to the Grange. He reached it; Mr. Markham was absent, and he was ushered into a room in which were two ladies.

He had prepared himself, as he thought, to perceive a change; but when the pale face and emaciated figure met his gaze, he was inexpressibly shocked, and tears, unbidden, started to his eyes. Thinking only of his mother, he did not notice the lovely girl, who, seeing him rush impetuously to the invalid, and recognising him immediately, glided from the room.

There were tears in your eyes, too, Kathleen, as you sought the solitude of your own apartment: tears of joy, that the playmate of your childhood had returned with a warm heart, and that the grief of your adopted mother would now be comforted.

Absence had been Lewis's best friend, for it had flung his faults into the background, and brought out, in her memory, his good qualities in strong relief.

"We have a visitor staying here"—observed his mother, as soon as the violence of her joyful emotion had subsided into a more calm felicity—"whom I hope you will like—Miss Lorimer; she has been the greatest

comfort to us during your absence, and well deserves to share our joy at your unexpected return."

"Unexpected, dear mother!" cried Lewis, "who, then, wrote to me to leave Australia immediately?" and he placed the mysterious letter in her hand.

At this moment the entrance of Kathleen Lorimer interrupted their conversation.

There is no need to make a long story of the sequel. That night there was a joyful surprise for Mr. Markham on his return home. Mrs. Markham recovered slowly, but surely—happiness was her best medicine. Kathleen was, if possible, more lovely than when Lewis last had seen her; and he—his character improved by all that he had learnt and suffered—loved her more tenderly and less selfishly than ever.

Before their marriage, Lewis contrived to make the discovery that it was his bride elect who had enabled him to return to England.

THE BUSH FIRE.

“WELCOME, my dear girl, to our Australian home,” said Charles Leonard, as he handed his sister from the dray; “if we have not English comforts to give you, we have at least English warmth and hospitality wherewith to welcome your arrival.”

There could be no doubt as to the sincerity of these words, for the pleasure on young Leonard’s face was unmistakeable, as, with Julia leaning on his arm, he led her into her new home, and presented her to his friend and partner, Hugh Clements.

Hugh was generally considered very good-looking, with handsome features, dark curl-

ing hair, and a bright, speaking pair of deep blue eyes. He was a "rising man" in the colonies; possessed ample means, a quick head, temperate habits, and, worth more than all, if only for the scarcity of the articles—good principles and a warm heart. Yet, with all these advantages, he was most diffident in his manners; and although anything but a coward, as many a daring exploit in bush life could testify, he had hardly courage to lift his eyes for a partial survey of his friend's sister.

When at length he did so, it was with a feeling of relief that he saw them standing together, almost unconscious of his presence, gazing on the novel scenery which surrounded the station, whilst Leonard was pointing out to his sister the different trees and objects in sight, listening to her exclamations of surprise and pleasure, or comparisons between the present scene and the old country.

The last rays of an evening sun streamed through the window and fell upon Julia's face and figure, displaying the finely chiselled

features, the dark eyes and swan-like neck, that gave a regal style to her beauty. Her figure was full and tall—almost too tall for a woman; but the air of refined elegance apparent in every attitude made the whole a perfect picture of feminine loveliness.

That evening, Julia, weary with her journey, retired early to rest; and it was not until a few days after, that, in a letter to a friend in England, she gave a long account of herself and her new impressions.

A few extracts from it will serve to convey a little of her past history.

“ My dear Caroline,

“ So many circumstances have occurred since my last letters that I must (if you still desire to participate in all my joys and sorrows, as in days of yore) write you a complete journal. I can imagine that you will be curious to hear by what strange combination of circumstances the ‘all-but-belle’ of giddy, fashionable C—, and the affianced of a gay officer, is now enacting the rôle of

housekeeper to a squatter's establishment in the colonies. It is a great change, and I can scarcely believe it is I myself who go about in a gingham dress superintending butter-making, mutton-pickling, and innumerable other bush amusements, which I am now assiduously studying.

“ You are aware—all C— was aware—that Captain Edward S—, of the 70th Foot, being in England, on leave of absence from his regiment then stationed in India, fell in love with Julia Leonard, proposed, and was accepted. This is four years ago. At that time no one knew that a bachelor relative of Edward's, from whom he had great expectations, had expressed his determination of making him his heir on the sole condition that he married a lady of title or of wealth; neither of which was I; and to the absurd report of my heiress-ship—circulated in C— by my aunt—was I indebted for the attentions of Captain S—, in the first instance; though I do believe that, after my own lips had told him I was a dowerless young lady,

sincere attachment, as well as honour, made him refuse to retreat from his engagement. This, however, did not last long. His relative heard some report of his attachment to me, and came down express to C—to inquire into it. At my particular desire, Captain S—acquainted him with the whole affair—my portionless condition and all. The consequence was, that he gave Edward the choice of Julia or future wealth. His leave of absence was almost expired; the time for decision arrived. Doubtless it was a struggle; I have vanity enough to persuade myself so; but mammon conquered; and, obedient to his relative, he joined his regiment.

“Although I now appear to write so lightly on this subject, you know me well enough to be convinced how deeply I felt his desertion. But grief was not my only sentiment. There was a stronger one—indignation; indignation against him who had flung aside what is above all price—a woman’s true affection, for this world’s advantages. If, however, I felt thus towards him, my in-

dignation was ten times stronger against myself for ever having loved one whom I now so utterly despised.

“ But I must not launch into a moralising strain, but proceed quickly with my narrative.

“ Eight months ago I read in the list of slain in the Indian war, Major Edward S—, of the 70th Foot. He had obtained promotion, and, most probably, distinction ; he had obeyed his relative, and bartered love for gold ; and all he gained was an early, awful death.

“ It is almost impossible to eradicate a first affection entirely from the heart ; and when I learnt thus suddenly that he was dead, I felt like a woman, and a very weak one. Fortunately, an event occurred which gave a turn to my thoughts. A letter reached me from my brother, wishing me to join him in Victoria, as he was comfortably settled there. My aunt opposed my departure ; but as I had discovered that her regard for me originated in no affection for her sister’s child, but because she anticipated I should make a good

match, I did not hesitate on account of her disapprobation.

“ The excitement of leaving England, and the voyage itself, were most beneficial. Our passage was long, but agreeable ; and I had taken the opportunity of some friends going to Australia to place myself under their protection.

* * * * *

“ You will expect some account of Melbourne itself, but I saw little of the town or its gaieties, for my brother was awaiting my arrival, and I proceeded immediately with him to his station.

“ Although it is seven years since the fickleness of a certain young lady drove him from England, I do not think he has the remotest idea of marrying, and looks a confirmed bachelor.

* * * * *

“ How can I describe to you my new residence ? It is situated in a pleasant valley, about one hundred miles from Melbourne, and full thirty from anything resembling a

village. Blue mountains, covered with forests, mark our horizon; and a clear stream ripples along at a little distance from the house, which is a queer-looking affair, being built chiefly of logs of wood, but is very snug and comfortable inside. We have a good head-shepherd, whose wife is my factotum. What I should do without her, Heaven only knows!

“I have not mentioned Charles’s partner—a prepossessing young man, but either very proud or very shy, *which*, I cannot make out at present. I fancy he considers me a sort of interloper and restraint upon their bachelor ways.” * * * *

“Poor Julia!” sighed her friend in England, after perusing this letter, “she tries hard to make-believe how little she feels it; but she will never love again; her trust in human nature has been too severely shaken.”

Meanwhile “poor Julia” passed her days as happily as could be. She had early learnt one great lesson—to conquer herself; and, instead of wandering beneath the gum-trees

like a forsaken maiden in romance, she exerted all her energies to impart to her brother's home that air of comfort which a true Englishwoman disseminates wherever she goes. There was always something to be done, and she entered into the rough life with a hearty good will, and at length found herself absolutely enjoying it.

There was, in truth, much to enjoy ; those wild rides through the bush, the quiet rambles beneath the shade of the stately trees, the lovely wild flowers that studded the ground like stars, forming an object for a stroll, if only to collect a group as a study for her pencil. Books, too, were plentiful. Strange to say, new ones were constantly being discovered even in this out-of-the-way place, to Julia's no small astonishment and delight.

" You are very kind," observed she to Charles, " to supply me with such good amusement against a rainy day, but how do you contrive to get all these new books from Melbourne ? What a trouble I am to you ! "

“ Pray, don’t give *me* credit for a literary taste,” returned he, laughing, “ or even for having ministered to yours, for I plead guilty to having forgotten your *penchant* that way. The fact is, Hugh is a great reader, and never goes from home now without bringing back a cargo of books ; when he’s once read them he never cares to see them again, which accounts for their lying about here.”

A prolonged “ Oh-h ” was all Julia’s reply, and she then dropped the subject ; but she did think it odd that most of the volumes were new and uncut, and evidently chosen more for a lady’s reading than a “ squatter’s.” At the same moment, by an unaccountable train of thought, she turned over in her mind, how very strange it was that, when unable to go out herself and collect an Australian bouquet, there was generally a little bunch of wild flowers placed in a small glass on her table, and arranged with such artistic care for the due disposal of their delicate tints, that they needed no alteration of position before being copied into her sketch-book.

“ Ah ! well,” said she to herself, as the result of this fit of musing, “ it’s only bush gallantry.”

Fie, Julia ! for shame !—you know better.

Yes ; Hugh Clements loved the beautiful Julia ; but, with the exception of such little acts of delicate devotion as we have recorded, it was never shown. He was too diffident ; in her presence the remembrance of his own humble origin was ever before him ; he looked upon her as a being so far removed above himself, that it would be an act of profanation for him to address her with words of love. Influenced by these sentiments, his manner towards her became more constrained, more respectful, more shy than ever.

Julia could not understand this ; she was piqued at his apparent coldness, and interested in him in spite of herself. She began to study his character, or at least so she pretended to herself, when she found how interested she was becoming in all his proceedings, and how the few words he occasionally addressed to her, fixed themselves in her

memory. But she was only studying his character, and it ended (as it often does when young ladies take in hand that peculiar branch of study) in her losing her heart, as far as one of her sex with propriety could, before it had, in set words, been asked for.

Hugh all this time lived on in miserable unconsciousness; he must have been mentally blind, for he attributed her oftener looks and voice, when addressing him, to a desire on her part to place him, as regarded herself, on a level with Charles, and thus, by treating him as a brother, crush any hopes he might have had the audacity to entertain.

The February of eighteen hundred and fifty-one arrived—a month well remembered in Victoria—and, with the excuse that the increasing heat of the weather and prevalence of bush fires would make his presence indispensable at another station belonging to them many miles away, Clements departed, with a firm determination not again to expose himself to the daily sight of one whom he so passionately, yet hopelessly, loved.

The heat was most oppressive, and the air, far from being refreshing, was almost stifling. To this Julia attributed the languor that stole over her with greater intensity every successive day since Clement's departure. She felt *ennuied* even in the bush. One day Charles had left her, to ride over to his partner, as some important purchases were being made in that direction; and as he could not possibly return till late in the evening, or perhaps not until the following day, she felt herself entirely alone.

Weary of sitting by herself, she determined (some two or three hours after noon) to find some shady retreat in the open air, and, for that purpose, wandered out of sight of the log-house—now stopping to rest awhile, now going rapidly on, although the intense heat made the slightest motion a fatigue. At length she flung herself upon the ground beneath a tall shea-oak.

“How the air chokes one Oh! for a fresh sea breeze!” sighed she, as she rose with the intention of proceeding home.

What a sudden change! Was it a thick black fog approaching? No; horror of horrors, it was smoke! and, as it comes nearer, the red flames are discernible.

She had never seen a bush-fire, but she knew instinctively that this was one, and fright, for a moment, chained her to the spot. Only for a moment—the next she was calmly considering the best method of escape. It seemed to her that a way to the house was as yet left open; could she but gain that in time, she was safe, as precautions had been taken, by cutting down, or burning, all the grass, etc., round and near the dwelling, for the safety of it and its inmates.

Scarcely, however, had she formed the resolution of hastening to the passage at present not reached by the fire, than she found that it was too late. The flames had spread rapidly, and the dense dark mass, intermingled with lurid streaks, was behind her; her only safety was in hurrying forward.

Everything was hushed in an awful silence: the noisy birds, the animals, the reptiles, all

living things had fled, and the fire came rushing on. Gradually the sound of horses' feet came to her; she looked back, and, from amid the smoke which had closed over her homeward route, a horse and rider appeared—evidently from their station, and in search of her.

She waved her handkerchief; she shouted to attract his attention. It succeeded; he heard or saw the signal, and galloped towards her. It was Hugh Clements.

Early that morning, some report of bush-fires in the immediate vicinity of their place had reached him, and, without waiting to acquaint young Leonard with the fact, Hugh started off, and reached the house about an hour after Julia had left it. He knew her favourite haunt, and hastened to it, through the smoke—almost through the fire itself, to the eminent risk of life—but little cared he for that.

He reached her, snatched her in his arms, and, infusing something like energy into the weary horse, they sped before the flames.

Not far off—perhaps a mile or two distant—was the bed of a dried-up stream, and beyond this a large tract of barren land being prepared for cultivation. If they could reach this; but the fire was gaining on them, the horse's steps became slower; how it maddened him that she should be in his arms and death behind! Yet he felt happy; he pressed her to his beating heart, and she drew not away; words that he had often longed to utter burst from his lips, and tears, not of anger, trembled in her eyes. He was happy, yet the atmosphere became more stifling, and the fire gained more and more.

He dug his spurs into the horse's reeking sides, who, roused with pain and terror, made, like an expiring flame, one last energetic effort before his career was run. Over the creek-bed, over the uncultivated soil; then he fell exhausted.

As she felt that they were saved, Julia fainted, and, when aroused to consciousness by the hum of voices near her, she saw herself surrounded by her brother and the people

on his station. They were looking, with horror depicted on their faces, at something near her. She partly raised herself, and followed the direction of their eyes. There lay Hugh Clements—pale, and bathed in blood.

IN the excitement or fall from the horse he had broken a blood-vessel.

“Hugh! dearest one, would that I had died with thee!” cried Julia, flinging herself upon him.

That dearly loved voice had power even then. He opened his eyes, smiled as she had never thought that one so reserved, so proud, could smile; he raised his arm to press her closer to him, but weakness conquered, and again he sank back like one dead.

He was carried to the station, Julia walking by his side. Her trembling limbs, her beating heart, were forgotten; she thought only of him, of the words that had passed his lips as they rode before the flames, and her anxiety, her newly awakened love, gave her a strength that seemed almost miraculous.

Days and weeks went by ; sometimes the hours lagged heavily, for he was in pain and danger, and Julia watched beside his bed, praying, hoping, despairing. Then he was pronounced out of danger, and she would have relinquished her post ; but there was a look of such agony in the eyes of the invalid if she attempted to leave him ; he, the once strong man, seemed to lean so wholly upon her, that she argued to herself, pity, as well as gratitude, bound her to his side ; and Julia was so very deeply absorbed in attending to his comfort, that she had not time to remember that “pity is near akin to love.”

Hugh was nearly recovered. He had left his sick-chamber, and passed the day upon a soft couch in the sitting-room, which had been placed near the window, that he might look out upon the gay sunshine and charming landscape, so refreshing to the eyes of an invalid. But it was a very strange thing ; he must have had very bad taste, for he perseveringly turned his face away from the

open window, and appeared absorbed in the contemplation of Julia's taper fingers, as she was busy at work.

"How restless you are this morning," said she; "how you fidget your head about. I'm afraid that pillow is not very comfortable."

"It is rather hard; a little re-arranging would be a great improvement."

What a fib! the pillow was as soft as eider-down, and he knew it, too; but it was such happiness to have her tall graceful figure bending over him, to feel her soft touch near his head, or her dark eyes gaze compassionately, tenderly, upon his.

Julia rose and re-arranged the pillow; but it was a most refractory article, and took a long while before it would settle itself as she wished.

"Julia!" said Hugh, taking one of her delicate white hands between his. The hand was not a very unhappy little prisoner, for, though it trembled violently, it made no effort to get away.

“Julia, do you remember the day of the bush-fire?”

“Remember!” she exclaimed, and their eyes met. Julia’s were instantly bent to the ground. She blushed deeply, and made the tiniest effort imaginable to withdraw her hand.

Hugh’s eyes remained fixed upon her countenance, and he held his prisoner clasped more firmly than before.

“Do you remember something you said when you thought that I was dying?—something that has been in my mind like a heavenly dream, during the long dreary nights of pain—in my recovery. Julia, whilst I was ill, I was content to give myself up to this pleasing delusion, if such it be; but now, tell me, must I forget those words, perhaps wrung from you in a moment of excitement; must my dear hopes fade away, or are they real?”

I never learnt what Julia *said*, but her blushes were so deep and painful, and she wished to hide her face somewhere, and

—it is very shocking—the most convenient place was Hugh's neck, so she laid her head there.

And now, gentle reader, if you possess an atom of imagination, you can fill up the sequel for yourself.

AN OLD MAID'S STORY.

A LARGE wood fire was burning brightly on the hearth, and shedding its cheering glow on the walls of Mr. Swanston's drawing-room. That gentleman was a squatter, who lived in Illawarra—a district appropriately termed the Eden of New South Wales. His station was a very comfortable one, including, as it did, a large substantially built dwelling-house, stock-yards, and innumerable out-buildings; and no one could have imagined, whilst taking a critical survey of the whole, that it was situated two or three hundred miles up the country.

The drawing-room into which we have

introduced you, gentle reader, was a well and comfortably furnished room. The paper on the walls was a trifle too striking, perhaps; but, if the exporters of goods for the colonies will send out such gaudy articles, the colonists, who have of course but a sort of Hobson's choice in the matter, cannot help buying them. There was a Brussels carpet upon the floor; an elegant bookcase, filled—not with gilt trash—but with sterling literature; a rosewood piano, and even a guitar, which last was lying upon the sofa, as if the fair musician had only just thrown off the blue ribbon from her neck.

The weather was not exactly cold, but there was a chilly rain outside, which made a warm log fire particularly cheerful; so evidently thought the merry tribe who were now sitting closely round it, after having tired their arms with battledore and *Les Graces*.

There were three girls, of nine, eleven, and thirteen years of age, and a curly headed little boy of six, who pretended to be fast asleep in an easy-chair.

At length one glanced at the guitar, and then, by some strange train of associations, exclaimed,

“ I wonder why Aunt Mary’s an old maid ! ”

“ Shall I tell you a story ? ” asked a soft musical voice close beside her.

All the children started up, and looked rather uncomfortable, and the one who had spoken appeared like a complete little culprit, caught in the very act of committing a peccadillo. They loved Aunt Mary too well, however, to be frightened long, and all drew closer into the fire as she began to speak.

“ Many years ago, when I was twice as old as little Mary here (stroking her youngest niece’s head), I was living with a distant connection, who, on my mother’s death, had offered me a home. She was very aged and infirm, and I soon found myself installed as her chief companion and attendant.

“ Before, however, I went to live at Ivy Cottage, as her little house was called, I had long known of the attachment of a gentleman

in our neighbourhood, who only waited for my mother's recovery to declare himself. That recovery never took place; and, whilst Mr. Stirling was absent on business, my mother died. Strangers took possession of our old home, and I hurriedly accepted my relative's invitation.

“ Whilst engaged in my numerous duties at Ivy Cottage, my thoughts unceasingly recurred to my absent lover. At times, I accused him of forgetfulness and inconstancy; at others, I momentarily expected his appearance. At last there came a letter. He was in our village, anxiously waiting to be informed when he might present himself at my new abode.

“ As I read this—my colour doubtless heightened, and my countenance became expressive of the deep pleasure I felt—Mrs. Linden's eyes were fixed upon me, as though she would have penetrated to my inmost thoughts. As I did not wish to meet him clandestinely, and as I considered her kindness in giving me a home deserved some

confidence in return, I handed her the letter, and asked when it would be convenient for him to come.

“ She replied, ‘ This evening,’ and I therefore wrote to that effect.

“ When my reply was finished, I was about to ring the bell for a servant to give it to the messenger, when, to my surprise, Mrs. Linden rose from her usual arm-chair beside the window, and, saying that she would herself give it into the right hands, left the room.

“ Thus alone with my happiness, I looked for Ernest’s letter to re-peruse it; it was nowhere to be found. But this gave me little uneasiness, as I should see the writer himself so soon.

“ How drearily hour after hour of that long evening passed away, and how every footstep in the distance made me start eagerly from my seat, I shall never forget. He never came. Mrs. Linden expressed her surprise, but endeavoured to suggest a hundred things which might have prevented his appearing;

and I retired to rest somewhat more calmly. But when the morrow came and went, and other days the same, and no Ernest called, I felt that we were never to meet again.

“ In no way could I account for the manner in which he had acted, and I therefore wrote to a friend who lived in his neighbourhood, to inquire whether he was absent from home or not. The reply staggered me. Mr. Stirling had sold everything he possessed, and left England for ever—some said for America, others for the Continent. Mrs. Linden called him inconstant, and gave me a long lecture on the fickleness of man, and then for some time never mentioned his name again, nor did I, but it was ever in my heart, and the winter months passed sadly by.

“ Mrs. Linden’s health now began rapidly to fail, and she was confined to her bed. One evening, when she felt herself dying, she bade me sit beside her, and told me all.

“ I had become necessary to her—she meant to leave me all she possessed, so that I should never want a home—therefore, she

determined to prevent my marriage. She opened the envelope I had directed to Mr. Stirling, took out my letter to him, and in its stead placed his own, torn in two. Seeing my handwriting outside, he, of course, never doubted that his letter had been returned by me.

“ Mrs. Linden died ; but her repentance—for she did repent the unworthy part she had acted—came too late to remedy the mischief she had done, or bring back my naturally indignant lover. The money I gave up to some poor relations of hers, who had far more claim upon it than myself, and I then determined to join your father in Australia.

“ The sea-voyage had always deterred me before ; but I felt certain that, in the state of mind in which Mrs. Linden’s revelations had left me, any change, even a disagreeable one, would be advantageous—so I ventured.

“ There ends my story, dear children ; and you now know ‘ why Aunt Mary’s an old maid.’ ”

“ Aunt Mary, Aunt Mary ! ” shouted a

boyish voice, the owner of which rushed noisily into the room, “papa’s brought home a gentleman from Sydney, and I’ve run on before to tell you.”

Leaving the younger ones delighted with the prospect of a strange visitor, Aunt Mary bustled about her household preparations.

Let us try and describe her.

Picture to yourself a cheerful, good-tempered countenance, of oval shape, with luxurious masses of dark brown hair drawn rather off the face; light blue eyes; a smooth, fair forehead; a slight, very slight, tinge of colour in her cheeks; and a mouth of indescribable sweetness; add to this a slight and graceful figure, rather below the middle height, and you see “Aunt Mary.” Her age it would not have been easy to discover. Sometimes, when weary with superintending the servants and assisting herself—often a necessary duty in the bush—she might appear between thirty and forty; but when among her nieces, joining in their pastimes and sharing

in their merriment, she would almost be taken for an elder sister.

The family, with their guest, were seated around the well-covered table, doing ample justice to the good things upon it; the children, as was usual with them when their father had been to Sydney, asking all sorts of questions about his journey; the elder ones striving to look sedate and womanly; Aunt Mary gracefully performing the part of hostess, but with a very pale face, and eyes red and swollen, as if with suppressed tears; and Mr. Anneslie (for that was the name of the visitor) feeling as uncomfortable and ill at ease as possible.

If people are miserable, or their hearts are breaking, they must not show it, but go on talking and laughing as if they were the happiest mortals alive; and no one would have imagined that two out of that seemingly cheerful party were not the care-untouched beings they feigned to be.

Mr. Anneslie, pleading fatigue and ill health, made an early retreat.

“How came your acquaintance with him?”

asked Aunt Mary, with great outward composure.

"I was introduced to him by —. He has been travelling all over the world, and wanted to see the bush life of New South Wales; so really I could not avoid asking him to come up with me.

"Are you sure Anneslie is his real name?"

"That's more than I can answer for; people often assume a name when going about the world. I only know he's a capital companion to travel with. It's a pity he's a bachelor. If one of these lassies were older, they'd cure him, perhaps, of his roving propensities?"

"I think Aunt Mary would do better," said the eldest boy, with a mischievous glance at her.

Next morning, Aunt Mary, although she had done everything to avoid it, found herself alone with Mr. Anneslie. It was evidently with an effort that he spoke, though, when the words did come, they were uttered in a cold constrained voice.

“ Why did you return my letter, torn and unanswered ? ”

“ I never returned it ; it was Mrs. Linden’s doing, and I never knew of it till you had left England.”

“ Mary ! ”

“ Ernest ! ”

Aunt Mary is not an “ old maid ” now.

HERBERT LINTON.

CHAPTER I.

Captain and his Master.

ALONG one of the loveliest lanes in Devonshire, strolled a young man of about twenty-one years of age. He was dressed after a very sportsmanlike fashion—a light shooting-jacket, and wide-awake, from beneath which his dark curling hair escaped. He carried a gun in his hand, which looked as if he had been indulging in the masculine propensity for shooting. Such was not the case, though a glance at the large Newfoundland—so like the dog a sportsman would take with him—would make one believe so; but in reality the gun was carried from habit,

whilst the thoughts of the owner were wandering to far other and softer themes.

The object that filled his fancy must have been of engrossing interest, for he never paused to admire the winding path in which he trod. The lane was narrow, and the hedges formed a thick wall on either side: sometimes meeting over head, and forming a luxuriant archway; sometimes allowing a sight of the bright blue sky, and permitting the sunshine to fall with a flood of light upon the ground. There was a gentle wind, and it swayed the leaves here and there, making "a sound as of a hidden brook, in the leafy month of June"; and gaily carolled the young birds as they fluttered from bough to bough; now boldly alighting on the ground, then quickly retreating as the huge Captain advanced towards them. But Herbert Linton, lost in thought, walked abstractedly on: sometimes dreamily patting Captain's shaggy head; sometimes breaking a young twig from an overhanging branch, and twisting it about in his fingers till it became as entangled as

his own thoughts, then throwing it carelessly away.

Thus he sauntered on for some time till he came to an opening in the hedge, where stood a five-barred gate, on the top railing of which he leaned, gazing upon as lovely a piece of scenery as can be found in our southern counties. Stretched far before him were rich fields of pasture land—the cattle that grazed upon them scattered here and there in artistic groups; some calmly feeding, others so peacefully “ruminating,” as they lay upon the ground, that, could one believe in the Pythagorean philosophy, the sight of their quiet happiness would almost tempt one to wish, if transmigration be obligatory, that one might be transformed into one of the vaccine race. There was a water-mill not far off, on Herbert’s right; and the clear stream that meandered far away to the left, till lost to sight, looked in the distance like a thread of silver winding among the green fields.

Herbert would have remained leaning over the gate, communing with his own mind,

perhaps, till the withdrawal of the sunshine had warned him to return home, had not two figures who approached drawn his thoughts from the inner to the outward world. They came from a cottage that was nearly hidden from sight among a large clump of elms on his left, and were walking slowly beside the stream, evidently enjoying the cool breeze that had sprung up at the approach of evening.

The taller of the two figures was a young girl, whom Herbert instantly recognised as the village beauty, who held unbounded sway over his heart; the other was a younger sister, a child of eight years old, whose restive movements seemed to give full occupation to the elder sister's watchful eyes. Now she would walk demurely by her side for a few yards, then she would bound away to gather some field-flower that caught her attention, or, perhaps, stoop to gaze into the stream and try to catch the reflection of her young face. And Herbert stood moodily watching the two, murmuring at the unhappy fate that compelled him to love on in silence—seeing in the dim future other

suitors around her—already in imagination picturing Alice Willoughby a bride beside the altar, and himself present, though not as bridegroom, when a sudden splash in the water—a faint scream—and he was recalled to the present moment.

It took him not a second to divine what had occurred; with a call for Captain he sprang over the gate, and at that instant saw Alice fling herself in after her sister.

In an incredible short space of time he had gained the water-side. Captain, with a dog's true instinct, had started off at the sound of the first splash, and was already in the stream. The little girl had risen to the surface; her fair curls were floating on the water as it hurried her towards the mill; but it was not of her that Herbert thought. He saw another form, struggling, sinking. The stream carried him along—he thought not of the mill—he heeded not the sound of the wheels, till when, with Alice in his arms, he was within a few yards of them.

The idea of dying with her he loved clasped tightly to his breast rushed through

his mind with a sensation of exquisite happiness; but life, so sweet, so dear to all of us—who, even when clasping those they love, would lose it without one struggle?

There was, about eight yards from the mill, a post planted firmly in the bank, and leaning almost horizontally over the water. Providentially they were carried towards the side on which it was. Herbert concentrated all his strength to seize it as he passed, and he succeeded. His safety was but half secured; one arm engaged in supporting Alice, his hold was barely sufficient to keep himself from being carried away by the force of the water as it rushed past him. Once he felt that he could hold on no longer; his head seemed to grow dizzy—he had no strength to call out for assistance; and, even could he have done so, the din of the mill and the rush of the water would have drowned his voice. He closed his eyes, feeling that he could no longer escape the awful death before him; and, true to his love, he felt one ray of thankfulness even then—that Alice was insensible.

At this moment he felt something laid upon his arm—a warm breath upon his face; he re-opened his eyes and saw the faithful Captain.

A new hope inspired him at the sight of his faithful friend, and his strength seemed almost to return; whilst Captain, understanding the danger of his master, barked loudly for assistance, until the attention of the man left in charge of the mill (his master and the others were out holiday-keeping) was attracted, and he came running to Herbert's assistance. With his help Alice was landed safely on the bank, and Herbert was soon by her side. He turned to thank the miller for his timely arrival and aid.

“Don't want no thanks,” growled the man. He was not of a sweet temper naturally, and being left alone whilst others were merry-making had made him worse than usual; “don't want no thanks. P'raps I can help you carry her home.”

At this moment it flashed across Herbert's mind that Mary, as well as Alice, had been in danger.

“ I fear,” said he, addressing the miller’s man, “ that her sister is lost. But—Captain, good dog, what is it ?” for Captain, who could not comprehend his master’s partiality, was determinately pulling at his clothes, as if to drag him to some particular spot.

With a hope that the child might be saved, Herbert, still bearing Alice in his arms, and followed by the man, accompanied the dog ; and relieved indeed did he feel to see the little girl sitting upon the grass, dripping like a Naiad, and crying with cold and terror.

Nobly had brave Captain done his duty. With that strong love for children which dogs generally possess, he had passed by Alice, who was nearer to him, and swam after the golden curls that floated on the stream. Catching her firmly by her clothes, he made for the shore ; but the bank, where he reached it, was steep, and he could not climb it without the risk of dropping his burden. It was lower nearer to the mill, but instinct told him it was more dangerous ; so he swam a considerable distance farther off, and safely landed with the child.

“If you will carry the child,” said Herbert, “I will take charge of Miss Willoughby”; and as no time was to be lost, for it was now becoming dark, they hastened on. But the miller’s man, who had not suffered so much fatigue as Herbert, and whose burden was much lighter, got on far before him.

As he bore Alice through the air, his long pent-up feelings found utterance; his love, his struggles, his fears—all burst from his lips, till signs of returning life compelled him to silence. She opened her full dark eyes upon him; then, as she saw in whose arms she rested—whose eyes gazed so anxiously, so tenderly, upon her face—her pallor fled, and a soft blush stole over her countenance.

Herbert’s resolution, that no word of his should seek to win her love whilst it was not in his power to woo her for a bride, almost gave way; but, young as he was, he had a high sense of honour, and, though he possessed little self-control, he was too generous to take advantage of that moment, when he had saved her life, and she was weak and

helpless, to say how willingly he would pass those anxious moments again, for the sake of bearing her head upon his shoulder. It required a stern determination to keep his lips from saying, "Alice, I love you; be mine—only mine"; but he triumphed over himself, and with his heart, as he thought, still hidden from her, he left her in her mother's care.

Herbert remained long enough to learn that Alice had taken a soothing draught, and was asleep, and that no serious mischief was likely to ensue to either from the accident; then, courteously refusing their earnest wishes that he would change his wet clothes, and take something to prevent his exploit from injuring him, he whistled to Captain, and slowly wended his way to his mother's house.

The next day, almost as soon as it was light, he quitted his native village for the distant metropolis, having left full directions with his mother for in some way rewarding the miller's surly but not bad-hearted man.

CHAPTER II.

The Promise.

THE father of Herbert Linton had been a tenant farmer on a large scale, and had, by dint of industry and good management, amassed a considerable sum of money. On his death, which occurred when Herbert was about six years old, he left his whole property to his wife, under her individual control, but coupled only with the wish that she would continue holding the farm for the sake of Herbert. The fair widow, what with personal and monetary charms, had no lack of suitors. Whether any succeeded in touching her heart, or whether, as she said, it was buried in her husband's grave, none could tell; but every offer was politely, though

decidedly, refused; and, as Herbert grew older, he gave his mother credit for having (young as she was) determined to pass the remainder of her life in widowhood as much for the sake of the living son as the dead father; and probably he was right. The sense of such unselfishness on her part would, in a boy of Herbert's impulsive disposition, naturally make his love for his mother approach almost to devotion; and, with one exception, she deserved it from him. Mrs. Linton was a very worthy woman; but she had one weakness, and that was ambition—not for herself, but for Herbert; and, like all mothers who are blessed with but one child, she thought that one a prodigy; and there was nothing to which she did not aspire in his name. He went to the best schools—learnt everything that money could enable him to be taught—was pronounced clever and good-principled by his tutors, and “a regular good fellow!” by his young friends; but Nature had not created him a genius—who, like a poet,

“*nascitur, non fit*”—and his mother was disappointed and unhappy. Still, if he could not distinguish himself by his talents, he might make a good match; and accordingly Mrs. Linton made a mental list of all the eligible young ladies for twenty miles round, who stood two or three steps higher on society’s staircase than herself.

Herbert was really a good-looking young man. His limbs, though strong, were well hung together; his voice was extremely prepossessing—frank, musical, and manly—neither boisterous nor effeminate—two qualities of the masculine voice which ladies generally detest; his eyes were blue, and naturally wore a joyous, unclouded expression; his forehead broad; his features well defined; his complexion bronzed, and his whole face set off by a profusion of rich brown curls: and as Mrs. Linton gazed at him through those maternal spectacles, which have the wondrous power of magnifying the good and sending the bad to a very remote distance—(pity we could not find an optician to supply

us all with such articles for every-day use)—as Mrs. Linton, through these peculiar spectacles, gazed at her son, she naturally thought her Herbert fit match for the loveliest, noblest, richest lady in England.

What were his ideas on the subject, she could not tell; in fact, she was almost afraid to inquire; for certain remembrances of a lovely companion of his holiday sports would obtrude upon her mind, and scatter her bright *chateaux en Espagne* to the ground.

Alice Willoughby had been Herbert's favourite playmate before he went to school, and the society of boys seemed in no way to diminish his affection towards her; for the holidays found him ever returning with fresh avidity to his friend. Whilst they were children—even up to the time that Herbert was sixteen—Mrs. Linton rather encouraged the boyish preference. Alice Willoughby, with her gentle manners, was an excellent companion for a boy like Herbert. She could not hope to keep him at home; and she knew that at their cottage he would acquire no

bad habits, and be safe from every danger but that of falling in love. When, however, Herbert was eighteen, and Alice but two years his junior, and he still continued his constant visits to the cottage, and evinced as much affection for the girl now budding into womanhood as he had done for the child, she thought it high time to change the current of his thoughts; and, accordingly, proposed a trip to London, to visit some of her connections there.

This was too great a temptation for a young man like Herbert to resist; so, with purse well stored by his indulgent mother, he paid his first solitary visit to town. Of course he thought himself quite the man, and a match ten times over for all the sharpers that London itself could muster; and, of course, in a few weeks, he had spent his money—how, he could never remember; run into debt as far as people would let him; and, not liking to write home an account of his folly, dispensed with his watch to procure the funds necessary for returning.

Mrs. Linton was surprised and angry, but she concealed both these emotions; paid his debts, and never uttered one reproach for his having incurred them. Herbert thought her the queen of mothers; and there was nothing he would not have said, done, or promised, for the sake of showing his gratitude. Upon this effect Mrs. Linton had shrewdly calculated.

“Herbert, my dear,” said she, a week after his return from London, “now that you have become a man, I wish to have a little serious conversation with you.”

At this pleasing compliment, Herbert good-temperedly followed his mother into the breakfast-room.

“My dear Herbert,” she continued, “now that you are of an age to have settled views in life, you must be careful that none of your actions will bear misconstruction. Have you seen Alice Willoughby since your return?”

“No,” replied Herbert, colouring deeply; he had felt too much ashamed to face his innocent companion after his wild doings in

London. "No ; but I think of going to see Mrs. Willoughby to-morrow, or the day after."

"Ah! Herbert! you will break my heart."

"Heaven forbid! my dear mother," said he, rather startled at this pathetic exclamation; "I wish I'd never set my foot in London; my folly there will always be a source of annoyance between us."

"Never, Herbert; have I not avoided the subject?"

Herbert felt his conscience smite him; his mother had never hinted at his extravagance. How unworthy of her affection he felt himself to be! and as he thought, he spoke.

"Dear Herbert," said she, well pleased with his answer, "I am sure you would not knowingly bring your mother to sorrow; and there is but one way now in which, I fear, you may cause me unhappiness and disappointment; I mean, by an injudicious marriage. Nay, don't start; you are getting old enough to think seriously on the subject, and, as you are now a man, I think it time

to tell you the prospect before you. Do you know that your father and myself have laid by more than sufficient to purchase the land we hold, so that the very house in which you were born may soon be your own? You will then marry well—into a family with influence. I may live to see you county member yet—why not?—but she who is to be mistress here must be something better than a cottager's child. Ah, Herbert! don't turn away from your mother. Believe me, it's no *love* you feel for her—mere brotherly affection, and that I would not interfere with; but promise me that Alice Willoughby shall never be your wife."

Herbert hesitated.

"You cannot refuse me," she continued, more earnestly than before. "At least, promise that whilst I live you will not marry her. You may not be held by that promise long": and Mrs. Linton, who had really set her heart upon gaining it, burst into tears.

Herbert decided. He had never seen his mother weep since the day when, a child of

six years old, his father's corpse had been carried to its last home; and her emotion powerfully affected him.

He promised. Mrs. Linton was satisfied; whilst Herbert, hastily quitting her, ordered a horse, and galloped in an opposite direction to that which led to the cottage where Alice dwelt.

Mrs. Linton, though she may appear otherwise, was a most affectionate mother, and really thought to conduce to his greater happiness by destroying his boyish preference for Alice. She had the means, as she had said, of purchasing the farm that their family had held for years. The owner was a spendthrift; the property was unentailed, and there was every probability that in a short time it would be brought to the hammer; and, now that all fear of having Alice Willoughby for a daughter-in-law had been quieted, there was nothing that she could refuse to Herbert.

He did not pay the intended visit to the cottage, but in a few days after was again in

London ; and there he spent several months. He then returned ; and, except an occasional visit to London, he passed the next two years at home, finding ever new beauties in his early love ; and, although he had not the slightest intention of breaking his word, he could not debar himself the pleasure of her society. What his lips dared not utter, his glances, his whole manner frequently betrayed. Then would he take himself to task, and bitterly repent the want of resolution that allowed him to act in a way that his heart told him was dishonourable. He knew that, having promised she should not be his wife, he had no right to tamper with her feelings ; yet the temptation was too strong for one indulged from childhood, to resist. He was ever in a state of excitement or depression ; and it was when in one of these repentant moods that we first made his acquaintance, as he sadly strolled down the secluded lane.

CHAPTER III.

ALICE.

WHILST Alice and her sister were sleeping soundly after their deliverance from the water, Mr. Willoughby and his wife sat up late together in earnest conversation. It was, indeed, no trivial matter that occupied their attention—being no less than a consultation as to whether they could dare the dangers and privations of crossing the ocean, and founding for themselves a home in a new country.

Mr. Willoughby's forefathers had owned not only the land that he himself tenanted—which was but a few acres—but a considerable portion of the village itself. As it descended from father to son, the property

diminished until all was gone; and then, tied by old recollections to the soil, they rented some of the land that had once been their own.

Since the present Mr. Willoughby had had the management of it, misfortune after misfortune had befallen him. Crops had failed, stock died, stacks been fired, his rent had been raised, and he was now considerably in debt. Having placed his position in its worst light before his wife, and acquainted her with all the arguments for and against Australia that occurred to him, he proceeded to explain what would be his future plans in the colony, provided she could make up her mind to emigrate.

“All that we possess,” said he, “would, when sold, clear up all our accounts, and leave us a balance of perhaps £250 to start with. I should advise that we take a cheap passage—for the sooner we begin to rough it the better—and on landing, go at once into the bush. The farming there is so different that our present experience will be of little

avail; but we can use our hands, and it seems to me that that is the great thing needed; and it will be strange if the three boys and myself cannot keep a roof of some sort over our heads—ay, and lay by too, so that we may some day have a farm of our own.”

Half through the night they talked, and turned the matter over in every way; and the result was that next morning Mr. Willoughby had a long conversation with his landlord. The Squire of the parish had now possession of the Willoughby property. He was, in the main, a good-hearted man; and, even had it not suited his own views, would have fallen into his tenant's plans. But it so happened that, a year after Willoughby had renewed his lease, an old friend of the Squire's had paid a visit to the Hall, and, seeing the cottage, had fallen in love with its rustic beauty, and wished to reside there. This was impossible; but when Willoughby on this morning made a business-like statement of his finances, and expressed a wish

that some arrangement could be made by which he could give up the lease and land, he met with no opposition; and the Squire, who had some esteem for his tenant, and was anxious to facilitate his departure, offered to purchase stock, crops, etc., at a fair valuation; and the future tenant—a newly married man, with a young romantic wife, who fell in love with the simple, appropriate furniture of the pretty cottage—was ready to buy the whole as it was.

There was no great delay in these arrangements; all parties were eager to have them settled, and Mr. Willoughby soon found himself without home or property, but free from debt, and with nearly double the sum he had calculated upon in his possession. For the first time in his life, money matters seemed to have prospered with him, and he looked upon it as an omen of success in his new career.

So secluded had the Willoughbys always lived, and so few friends, or even acquaintances, had they, that their intended departure from the village was hardly known ere it

had taken place. There were, consequently, few farewells, and those not of a heart-breaking description. They arrived in London without accident or adventure, soon found a suitable vessel, and in a fortnight had for the last time gazed on the shores of their native land.

And Alice—what had been, what were her feelings? It would be difficult to say; she herself understood them not.

From earliest childhood, Herbert had been her only companion, her only friend, with the exception of her own family; for, sprung from a class superior to those whom circumstances made on a level with them now, and educated far beyond their present position, they had retired from the society of those equal in position, but inferior in manners, whilst pride made them prefer a solitary life to being patronised by people who were their superiors only in wealth. But Herbert, with boyish confidence, had overcome all obstacles, and installed himself during his holidays as a constant and welcome visitor. During his

first stay in London, and for some time after his promise to his mother, they had seen or heard nothing of him; and Alice, unable otherwise to account for the change, had come to the conclusion that it arose from the difference of their position as regarded money. Herbert's subsequent conduct partly convinced her to the contrary; for, unable to forego her society, he had again become her constant companion; and as she listened to his vivid pictures of life, now sentimental, now amusing—as she marked the trembling of his voice, or the softened glances of his eyes, as he recounted some tale of love or romance—as he opened for her the stores of a well-cultivated mind, and found for her new charms, new beauties, in her every-day life—she compared him with the villagers around her, and certainly not to the advantage of the latter. And Herbert—as he saw the mind of the cottage girl grow beneath his teaching, and open, like some fair flower to the warm sunshine, to the light that he poured upon it—no wonder that he loved what had sprung

up, as it were, under his touch; he loved, struggled, loved on, and each day felt the promise he had given more galling, more hard to bear.

Then he saved her life; and she had heard, as he bore her in his arms, words that revealed the struggle of his heart—words that told her that he loved—but told her also that his love was hopeless: and she had never seen him since. She could not understand his absence. “Had he surmised,” thought Alice, “that she had learnt his feelings, and was desirous to spare them both the awkwardness of meeting again?” How unfeeling, she argued, when they were about to leave England, and he would see her no more.

She little knew that Herbert, awoke by the accident to the consciousness of the strength of his own sentiments and his inability to conceal them, and aroused to a full sense of the want of honour he displayed by his vacillating conduct, had set off to London the morning after he had saved her life, with

the intention of going on the Continent, and travelling indefinitely about till he had regained some peace of mind.

When the day before that fixed on for their departure from their native village arrived, Alice determined to write to Herbert. She had never thanked him for having saved her life; and she could not go without, if only by letter, bidding him farewell.

“ Herbert, we leave England, and I shall see you no more. What I feel—what I think—I know not; in my heart, as in outward things, all is confusion; but of one sentiment I am sensible—gratitude to him who risked his own to save my life. My friend—playfellow of my childhood—I cannot thank you in words, but you that have often read my inmost feelings will know that Alice is not ungrateful. Herbert, forget me; you can readily do so; engage in other pursuits; forget these last two years in which you have taught me what is life, and let your friendship for me become like a half-

forgotten dream of childhood. We shall wander together no more in our favourite walks; you will tread them again—I, only in memory—and new scenes will never efface them from my heart; but you, Herbert, think of me only as your friend and old play-mate,

“ ALICE.”

This letter—hastily written, but in which, though she knew it not, her attachment for Herbert spoke in every sentence—she quickly despatched to Summer Hill Farm, where she supposed him to be. Months—long, weary months to both — elapsed ere that letter reached his hands.

The Willoughbys sailed; they arrived in Australia, and were soon far away in the bush; and then Alice, for the first time, learnt that Herbert had gone to London the day after the accident. Mr. Willoughby had called to thank him for his exertions the very day he left Summer Hill Farm; he had seen Mrs. Linton, and, from some expressions she had purposely let fall, he discovered that she

viewed Herbert's attentions to his daughter in no favourable manner. To any but the mother of his child's preserver, pride would have dictated to her haughty speech as haughty a reply ; but he was silent till his return, when he unbosomed himself to his wife, and she, having partly guessed the mutual attachment, advised him to spare Alice the pain of learning this ; so the Lintons were never mentioned till they thought the novelty of bush life and the utter hopelessness of her love had effaced Herbert's image from her mind.

CHAPTER IV.

Diggers' Stories round the Bush Fire.

THREE years have gone, and it is now February, 1853.

Scene—In the bush.

Time—Sunset.

Dramatis personæ—Some half-dozen gold-diggers, seated round the remnants of a bush fire for companionship' sake, although it is the middle of February, and the thermometer is 98° in the shade.

If you could have looked at them, gentle reader, there would have been no need to announce their "profession." The dark blue serge outer shirts—the wide-awakes—the short pipes—the unshaven faces—the tin dishes and pannikins from which they

had eaten and drunk—the leather belt, with fossicking-knife or hatchet—the swags, large tin gold-washing dishes, and a dismembered cradle upon the ground, would have revealed a party of gold-seekers without one descriptive word.

The time was, as I have said, sunset; and the west was one mass of crimson clouds, that towered above one another like burning mountains pregnant with heat and light. Gradually and slowly they fell beneath the horizon; faster came the darkness; the shadows of the gum-trees grew gigantic in their length; and the fire, round which the diggers reclined, seemed to burn out more brightly than before, whilst its flickering flames shed a ruddy glow upon their weather-beaten countenances.

“Either the trees are walking,” said one, “or we shall have some fresh mates to-night;” and, as he spoke, he pointed to some shadows which advanced towards them.

The speaker had been a strolling actor, and, as the foremost of the three approaching

figures was within ear-shot, he hailed him with the impromptu parody—

“Is it a digger that I see before me?”

A hearty burst of laughter followed the speech; the effect of which—taking into consideration the wild scene, and still wilder-looking audience, the grotesque attitude of the speaker, and the pompous manner he flung into the words—was ludicrous in the extreme.

“Jim Nesbit, I’ll bet a nugget!” cried the new arrival, in a voice quickly recognised by the other; and with few preliminaries the three weary pedestrians were invited to avail themselves of the fire and join their party for the night. They eagerly accepted the friendly offer, and were soon fully occupied in that necessary, but most unromantic, part of our existence—eating. To judge by their appetites, they had fasted long; and, after this had been somewhat appeased, they explained their situation, which was very simple.

They had been at one part of the diggings,

and had laboured without success; they had heard of wonderful discoveries farther north, had determined to go there, and for that purpose had started early in the morning; but, having soon lost their way, they had wandered about, they knew not where, till the sight of the fire had directed their steps towards the other diggers.

“And where, then, did you want to go?” inquired one with the nasal twang of the Yankee.

“Eagle Hawk Gully, or, maybe, beyond it.”

“Ah, I’ve heard that’s a used-up place; we’re going farther on, I guess. Where do you come from?”

“Fryer’s Creek.”

“And what now might you be taking a day?” pursued the interrogator.

“That’s hardly a fair question; sometimes much, sometimes little.”

“But never enough, I warrant,” observed another. “It’s a strange thing, if I get six ounces in one day, I’m disappointed if I do’n’t get more the next; and I believe, if I

was to pick up a nice nugget of five or six pounds, I'd be expecting the day after to do the same, and cursing my bad luck if I didn't; and in England I've often slaved for a shilling a day. What craving, unsatisfied mortals we are!"

The speaker, who was a thin, wiry-looking little man of perhaps two score, here threw himself upon the ground, as if the effort of philosophising had been too much for him.

"Your own fault, Sam, if you slaved in England. You should have come to our free enlightened country—there's no slavery there," said the American.

"I thought," observed a young man, one of the new arrivals, "that slavery existed to a greater extent in America than in any other country."

"Stranger!" replied he, taking his pipe from his mouth, and surveying the young man from head to foot, as if astounded at his audacity, "I don't take niggers into consideration when I'm addressing free men."

"Oh!" rejoined the other, and relapsed into silence.

But the natural inquisitiveness of the Yankee overcame his indignation.

“Is that dog yours, stranger?” said he.

“Yes.”

“What’s his name?”

“Captain.”

“What’s his price?”

“He’s not for sale,” replied Leonard, curtly.

“No need to grow bilious about it,” said the American, coolly; “I suppose this is a free land, and I suppose, therefore, I may ask the price of any dog I fancy, without being looked at as if I wasn’t a native of the most free and enlightened country in the world, and raised under the stars and stripes.”

“I tell you what,” interrupted Sam, “we none of us look inclined for sleep, but I’m sure, if you’re going to argufy about that blessed America, as you did last night, you’ll soon send us off. Now, I’ve often been in the bush before, and with a pleasant lot of us too, and we’ve sat round a fire like this, and told stories one after another half the night through, with something to moisten one’s

throat between whiles, and the comfort is, any one can go to sleep as likes, except the one as is in turn giving us a yarn."

"Well! I'll begin," said one of Leonard's mates, "if you'll all promise to do the same."

"Agreed, agreed," cried several voices, and the gold-digger commenced.

Half-a-dozen words to describe him.

He had been a mechanic, and was a self-educated man; he had no little confidence in himself, and in his oratorical powers; and, as he sat leaning against a gum-tree—his fair Saxon features lighted up by the fire; his broad, well-knit figure, displayed beneath the folds of his serge skirt; his well-hardened hand and muscular arm laid carelessly upon the ground; his wide-awake flung aside, and his thick light brown hair falling artistically about a face naturally fair but slightly bronzed by exposure to the sun; his features resolute and intellectual; his voice powerful and not unmelodious—as thus he sat, he formed a good specimen of the middle class of Australian gold-diggers.

“ I think,” said he, “ as we are all gold-seekers together, I will give you a short story of gold-digging life, which I know to be true; and I think also that we must all feel bound in honour only to relate what we can rely on as having taken place in real earnest.

“ The mates I had when I first took to this line were two cousins. They were no relations of mine, nor even friends; but they came out in the same ship as myself, so we settled to club together. One was a married man, and had left his wife behind, and I never could understand what could have made the cousins companions—their characters were so opposite. But, after I had been a fortnight with them at the Mount (we were almost the first diggers there), the unmarried cousin let out the secret one evening, when he had been drinking rather too freely. I gathered from him that his cousin’s wife had been originally engaged to him, and then, seeing one she liked better, had suddenly changed her mind, and broken her

troth. She may have acted wrong—it's difficult for a stranger to say—but she was well punished for it in the end. George, the favoured lover, acted very fairly; he offered to leave the country, so as to give his cousin a better chance; but the other pretended to be satisfied so that the lady were happy, and they were married. But somehow, after the marriage, things went ill with George; reports were always being spread that he was about to fail, and many others injurious to his credit; and the consequence was, the thing they so talked about happened, and George did fail. I have my own suspicions as to who helped all this forward, but you will be able to judge for yourselves by-and-by. So they came to emigrate. George would have brought his wife with him; but the cousin advised otherwise, and she was left behind.

“ Well! we had been at the Mount perhaps three months, and had collected no little gold, I can tell you—”

“ How much?” inquired the Yankee.

“ Never mind ‘how much’ now,” rejoined

the narrator, rather testily, “ don’t interrupt me, please—I’ll not detain you long, as they say at public meetings. Let’s see—we’d got together a good deal of gold; and as there were not so many pleasant neighbours about as we should have liked, but rather the contrary, our wealth gave us increased uneasiness. Riches beget anxiety—as I used to write in my copybook.

“ One evening I had gone to fetch some water, of which we were getting short; George had gone to get us in a supply of meat, etc., and we left the cousin in charge of the tent. I had forgotten to take a new rope with me that I knew I should want, and turned back for it. When I entered the tent, I saw the cousin in earnest conversation with a remarkably pretty young woman; but on seeing me, he abruptly broke off the conversation, shook her warmly by the hand, and she departed. The only words I had overheard were, ‘To-night, after dark;’ and, as I thought it some assignation of his own, it slipped my memory.

“When work was over, and we were taking supper, said the cousin, ‘I’ve a suspicion that an account of our luck has got abroad, and I saw some ill-looking chaps hanging about; suppose we keep ready, in case of anything.’ ‘Here’s my pistols loaded,’ said George, and he took one from his belt; ‘if any one comes they’ll meet a warm reception; it’s no good stopping to parley with them.’

“I should have told you before that George was of a hasty disposition—always doing a thing in a hurry, and repenting it at leisure. However, to proceed with my story.

“It was nearly dark outside and in, and we were still sitting up talking, when we saw a dark form close outside, as if leaning against the tent and endeavouring to enter. ‘Who’s there?’ cried I. There was no answer, but the figure entered. The cousin whispered in George’s ear, but George seemed irresolute. ‘Who are you?’ said he. ‘Speak or I shall fire.’ The figure advanced closer. George’s arm was pushed

by his cousin—the pistol was fired—there was a groan and a fall.

“ My first thought was to strike a light; and I shall never forget the scene. The woman that I had met in our tent before, was lying upon the ground; and when her features were revealed to George, he recognised his wife. I looked round for the cousin, for I instinctively connected him with the deed; but he was gone, and we never saw him again.

“ We raised her from the ground, and placed her upon a mattress, and I rushed off for a doctor; but she was mortally wounded, and died in a few hours. From her we learnt that she had followed her husband to Melbourne, and from there to the Mount, and had that day arrived. Impatient to see George, she went to our tent; but the cousin spoke so forcibly of how angry her husband would be at her having followed him against his wishes, that she, too trustful, begged him to break the news and soften his displeasure. This he promised to do, and bade her return

that evening. When she saw her husband, joy, fear, and excitement were so great that she could not speak.

“How or when the first thought of the cousin’s atrocious scheme occurred to him, it is impossible to say; but it was assisted by the fact that some solitary gold-diggers had been murdered, and their tent robbed, two nights before; so that George was more hasty than he would otherwise have been, even if it was his hand that fired the fatal shot. It was dark at the time, and I have my doubts. George did not survive his wife two days; he died in a raving fever, reproaching himself as the murderer of his wife; and they are buried side by side not far from Mount Alexander.”

The speaker paused, and there was a few moments’ silence. He had been heard with attention, and even interest; the very vagueness of his strange story possessed a charm for his excitable audience. To the silence succeeded a busy hum of criticism, and, this exhausted, another story was commenced.

The reciter was a sailor; he spoke of all sorts of possible and impossible adventures—of perils by sea and land—interlarding his conversation with so many oaths and nautical phrases that his rambling “yarn” was rather difficult to follow, and none were particularly sorry when he ceased. The critics, however, were not remarkably ill-natured; the worst came from the American, who observed that, “If Jack had only sailed under the stars and stripes, he’d have encountered more wonderful adventures, and better learnt how to relate them;” but a general “hush,” as a third person essayed to contribute his quota to the evening’s entertainment, fortunately drowned the sailor’s reply.

The new speaker was evidently a person of education and refinement. He was the son of a merchant whose extravagance had brought ruin on himself and family. The son had emigrated years ago, but had been unfortunate, and had taken to the rough life of a gold-digger as a last resource.

“It happened,” he commenced, “that

when I first landed in Sydney, some years ago, there was about to be executed one of the most hardened convicts. It is not necessary to relate the many crimes he had committed: it is sufficient that he was going to die; and, in glancing over an account in a Sydney paper of his previous life, I learnt that he was a native of the same country town as myself. Some unaccountable feeling made me desirous of seeing him before he was executed; and, on the plea that I might be able to deliver any message or last wishes to his friends, I was admitted to his cell. At first he regarded my visit as an intrusion; but, as I spoke of the scenes in which we had both spent our boyhood (for he was little older than myself), his reserve gave way, and in that and subsequent interviews I learnt his history.

“He was an orphan at twelve years old, and lived with an uncle, a shoemaker, who bore a bad character, and whose treatment of him was most severe; hard worked and half fed, his existence was a wretched one. One

winter evening, when quite a lad, he had been sent out a long distance with some finished work. As he returned, hungry and tired, he spied a piece of paper on the ground, in which some money appeared to be wrapt. He eagerly picked it up, and took it to the nearest shop window; his disappointment was excessive, as you may guess, in finding only a bad half-crown. The temptation was too great for him; the shop against which he leaned was full of what he needed—bread. He entered, and, tendering the money, asked for a loaf. Perhaps his face betrayed him, for it was his first dishonest act, although he had been thrown among bad associates: however, they discovered it; he was given up to justice, and spent the next four months in prison. Here, flung among companions, young in years, but old in every vice and crime, what could be expected? Still he made one effort to recover his position; when the prison doors were opened to him, he returned to his friends, but they, glad of the excuse, turned him from their doors. The

result may be easily guessed—he must steal or starve—and hunger soon stifled the last warnings of conscience. A down-hill path is rapid and facile; he grew into manhood among criminals, among thieves, among the lowest of the low, and, with a quicker intellect and greater courage than them, he outdid his companions in crime. He died a felon's death—he who, under a wiser system of criminal legislature, might have become a valuable member of the country he disgraced.

“ You will wonder why I have taken up your time with a story of such common interest—a mere tale of every day—and I will now explain.

“ I will go back to the time when I was a boy of eight years old.

“ I was sitting one evening alone with my mother, who was ostensibly engaged in letter-writing, but in reality devouring the third volume of some interesting novel. If my father entered for a moment, down went the book, and the pen was taken in hand; for

he was no friend to the circulating library. Whilst she was busily occupied with her heroine, I, boy-like, amused myself with rummaging her desk. Suddenly I routed out a solitary half-crown. 'I shall claim this,' said I; and I held it out to her. 'No; throw it behind the fire,' said my mother, vexed at being interrupted; 'it's a bad half-crown, and I don't know why I've kept it so long.' 'Bad,' thought I; 'then it's no use to me'; and I was about to consign it to the flames, when a new thought came into my head. 'I say, mother!' I exclaimed, 'what fun to wrap it up carefully and throw it into the street, and I'll watch at the window, and see how disappointed some poor wretch will look!' 'Yes, yes, child—anything; don't worry so,' answered my mother, half mechanically, for she did not, I am sure, hear what I proposed; but she continued her book, and I acted upon my sinful idea.

"That night did the future felon first succumb to temptation, and it was my hand that flung the means of sinning in his path."

Here the narrator abruptly paused ; he was evidently deeply affected as he recalled that thoughtless act of his childhood.

“ Can’t say that’s a very entertaining story,” observed the American, “ or what good it does, your reproaching yourself about it. A thing once done can’t be helped.”

“ There is this advantage in my short narrative, in spite of the little interest that I grant it possesses :—It may make us remember of how great consequence our smallest words or acts may be to ourselves or those around us ; and it may induce some of us to be more thoughtful in what we are too apt to look upon as ‘ *little things*.’ ”

“ Maybe you’re correct there,” said the Yankee ; “ but it’s not the kinder sort of thing I like to hear when I’m in the bush. I like something exciting—something of a more go-ahead style. Now, I remember an edifying anecdote of a Texas settler, and you shall have it. You see I’ve travelled all over this blessed globe, as I may say ; there’s not a gully in California I don’t know as well

as the state in which I was raised. And I can tell you one thing: your gold's no more to be compared to ours—don't care a cent what other people may say; but your Australian gold's no more to be compared to true Californian stuff—not so easy to get, or so good when you've got it—no more than you can compare the best fall you have in England to our glorious, mighty Niagara.

“But I'm running away from Texas. You all know about Texas, and how we got it, and how we mean to keep it. But this has nothing to do with what I'm going to tell you, which happened years upon years ago, and was told me by my Aunt Diana when I was running about in petticoats.

“It was a lovely evening in summer—and it is summer weather that we get in America—that some new settlers halted for the night. They were journeying to the far west, and had already come a weary distance. The goodwife was preparing the supper for her children, and the man was gone to cut down some boughs to form a sort of tent, when he

came to a small clearing in the forest, and a log cabin looking as good as new, but quite empty. I reckon he wondered and wondered what it meant; however, he didn't stop long, you may guess, calculating who owned it, but back he goes to his wife, and in a pretty considerable short time they were all comfortably abed and asleep in a rough sort of loft; and, having drawn the ladder up after them, they felt tolerable secure. In the middle of the night, when it was as black as a nigger, they heard like a child moaning and crying outside the outer door. At first they thought it was the wind or the logs creaking, but soon they settled that it was a child, and the wife, who was a feeling kind of woman, couldn't bear to hear it; so up got the husband, lowers the ladder, and down he goes to open the door. Before he had time to save himself he was seized by wild beasts—jaguars, I guess—and torn to pieces. He had only time to call out to his wife to pull up the ladder; and through the night the mother and the children sat shivering with fear, and

listening to them 'tarnal animals howling because they were out of reach. The next day, by tarnation good luck, some other settlers took that road and heard them crying for help. And so they were released, and the story got known. Now, hand us over something to wash it down."

"A very necessary termination," said the mechanic. "Is it true? I fancy I've heard it before."

"Likely; and that proves that it's founded upon fact."

"Rather jumping at a conclusion. I never heard of such wonderful animals before—it is almost too marvellous to be true."

"Not for America—everything there is on a grand scale—we beat the world hollow in every point. I'll not remind you of our lakes, our forests, our swamps, our storms, or even our go-ahead Niagara that would put out Vesuvius in a flash of lightning—you can't find their equals in the whole world put together; it's a state subject—quite an acknowledged thing—and it's in

every blessed thing the same. If we get up a subscription, we do it and no mistake; if Jenny Lind gives a concert, we let the dollars fly like cents. Our agues and fevers are the real thing—no counterfeit article; and, if any of you don't believe it, just go and buy a lot near one of our beautiful swamps, and you'll no longer doubt it. Why, I remember a fever I once had, and my head was so precious hot with it that it burnt through the pillow-case and singed the feathers."

"They should have sent you headforemost to clear the North-west passage," said the mechanic, drily.

"Ah, you may grin—but it's quite true that, and no need to stare. Bless you, it's nothing in America."

His audience laughed.

"You don't expect us to believe all that, I hope?" said one.

"Why not?" replied the Yankee. "Who doubts it?"

Here the sailor gave a long whistle.

"What do you mean by that?" said the American, facing him. "I'm a pretty smart

fellow, as you 'll discover. Do you believe me?"

"Ay, ay, I believe yer, mate," said the sailor, taking his pipe from his mouth and deliberately knocking out the ashes; "but if you 'd messed as many years in the fo'castle of a British man-o'-war as I have, you 'd have spun a better yarn, that's all."

The mirth that followed the sailor's retort was so hearty, that the two who were about to quarrel could not resist joining in it.

"I vote we have a drink all round, and then to sleep," said one; but the proposal was negatived by the majority.

"No shirking," cried they; "who's going to give us a tale now?"

"I will," said a reserved-looking man, who had sat rather apart from the rest; and none could have told, from his motionless features, whether he had heard all that had been said, or whether it had fallen upon unheeding ears.

"I will give you a sketch of my life—partly because it will relieve my own heart to speak of what I suffer; partly because the history of an undisciplined mind may be a

warning to some of you who are just entering manhood."

As he spoke he drew nearer to the group, and displayed his countenance to Herbert and his two mates, who had not before seen him.

Even in the levelling dress he wore he looked the aristocrat; and there was something in the curl of the well-formed upper lip, in the prominent cast of the Roman features, in the dark piercing eye, that told of one who had held a mighty influence over the hearts and intellects of others; whilst the lower portion of the mouth and face—full and voluptuous — and the careworn lines that sorrow, rather than time, had left upon his countenance, spoke of uncontrolled passions, and of the corroding misery that follows their indulgence.

He pushed a mass of long raven hair from his face, and in a voice musical, yet full of power—with a manner that, more than the actual words he used, betrayed one accustomed to speak and to be listened to—he began the story of his struggles, his follies, and his punishment.

CHAPTER V.

ELISE.

“ I WILL make my narrative a short one. I was born a younger son, and almost from my cradle I felt this bane of my existence ; but it was when I was approaching manhood that its effects fell upon me with the greatest force. I loved one, beautiful—how beautiful no words of mine could say ; and I believed, mad fool that I was, that my love was returned. But why speak of this here ? My eldest brother, though he had no title to inherit, was heir to my father’s property and family influence. I was rejected, not because I was not loved, but because I was a younger son. What bitterness, what hopeless struggles, the very words seem to convey to me !

“ After my brother’s marriage I had an illness—a fever, I believe—and I awoke from

it with a desolate—ay, worse than that—with a seared and vindictive heart. The year after this, my father died—my mother had been dead years before—and I felt that I had no tie—no good inducement left ; for I was an unbeliever in deed, if not in word. I panted for revenge. I knew but of one way of injuring my brother, in whom family pride was the prominent sentiment—that was, by debasing myself, and, through me, my family. I had some talent, and was returned, on high Tory principles, for a small borough ; but, as soon as my seat was secured, I horrified my friends and constituents by a public display of the most democratical spirit. I believe I spoke forcibly ; I felt what I said, for I hated the falsity of that society which sold her I loved away from myself. At the dissolution of Parliament, however, I was in no pleasant situation. I was looked on with deserved distrust by all parties, and for three years I lived by periodical writing—sometimes well paid, and spending my money most unwisely ; at others, writing for my very bread.

“ It was the time of the Chartist demon-

strations; but one inducement detained me in London. A girl for whom I had a sort of liking, and who—God forgive me!—had lived with me for the last two years, was on the eve of her confinement. I saw her safe from danger, and leaving, with little exception, all the money I possessed with her, I started to address a vast meeting of Chartists, which was held not two miles from my brother's country seat. I had written to acquaint the principal leaders that I would come, and large placards, with my name conspicuous upon them, were distributed far and wide. I gloried in my revenge. I pictured to myself my brother, humbled, annoyed at the disgrace. I never reflected on the awful responsibility I took upon myself when I roused the passions of the uneducated multitude into madness.

“ That night the house where I was born—where she I had loved was even then lying dangerously ill—was attacked. A few days after, the plumed hearse bore away the fair young wife; my brother was a widower; and the heir so long expected—so sorrowfully

brought into the world—lies gently, till the judgment-day, upon his mother's breast; and I—I—demon that I was—exulted in the evil I had done.”

Here he paused; and, covering his face with his hands, he remained silent for some moments. He then resumed his narrative.

“ I flung myself into Chartism. In the riots of 18—, in the open-air meetings, in everything democratic or exciting, I bore a prominent part. Once I returned to London, to see her whom I had left behind, and my child. The woman had gone—left me for another. I scarcely grieved, though I had liked her better than I ever liked any of her sex after my first overwhelming disappointment; but my mind was lost in political strife, and the first judgment upon me passed unheeded. I soon became a marked man; and as I saw more behind the scenes—as I discovered the selfish aims that were hidden from the deluded multitude beneath the flimsy veil of patriotism—I became disgusted with myself and the demagogues around me. I became a voluntary exile, and for seven

years wandered about Europe ; and, strange to say, a certain amount of good fortune appeared to befriend me, and any mercantile affair I undertook prospered.

“ Then a wild longing seized me—a wish once more to see familiar scenes, to tread again where I had trod in long years past. I came to London. Never shall I forget that first evening of my return. Desolate, amid a crowd ; I, who might have won fame, who might have raised my fellows—I, abased by my own guilty, remorseful conscience, wandered along, unnoticed and unknown.

“ A pretty dark-eyed child followed me ; it was spring-time, and she held in her hand a few bunches of violets for sale. Actuated by some indefinable impulse, I took one from her, and, saying a few kind words, went on my way. The next evening I met her again, and often after ; for, attracted to her in a manner most unaccountable, I sought the streets she frequented, and very soon I won her simple childish heart to pour her troubles into my ear. Her mother, from what I could surmise, was an abandoned woman, and left

her child in the care of a person, who, during the parent's absence, sent her out into the streets with flowers to sell. The child interested me so much that I determined to seek the mother. I succeeded, and discovered that she was indeed one of the most depraved of her sex; but her depravity was of my making; but for me she might have remained as pure as Elise, her daughter—mine—yes; this woman, this disgrace to her sex, was the mother of my child.

“ Oh, when we tempt a fellow-being to take the first step in sin — presumptuous mortals that we are!—we dare to think that that one step may be the last; but each succeeding one grows easier and more tempting, till at length we can no longer pause, but rush headlong over the precipice.

“ The agony I suffered for some months none would believe. Elise was my child, and I loved her with a heart that had nought else left to love; but my own sin recoiled with fearful power upon myself. I had no legal authority over her destiny, and that woman felt her hold upon me; with money I was compelled to purchase kindness for the child;

and almost maddened was I at times to hear her praise her beauty, and prophesy conquests and admiration for her in a few years.

“ At this time a gentleman, whose life I had helped to save abroad, left me a considerable legacy; and I now made a determination, and patiently awaited the best moment for putting it in execution. It came at last. I seized a time when she was out of health and spirits to urge the advantages upon her; and, to tell it in a few words, I married the mother for the sake of the child. She died a year afterwards, and Elise and myself emigrated; new scenes and new faces would, I thought, banish the past. After a short stay in Melbourne, I determined to proceed up the bush, to look after a sheep-run I wished to purchase. I was rather detained, and was absent nearly seven weeks. When I returned—thinking to clasp my child in my arms, and never separate from her more—Elise, and the people to whose care I confided her, were gone, and I have never seen them since. All I could learn was, that they had suddenly left—none knew where. It is sixteen months ago, and I have been childless and a wanderer to this day, seeking for my Elise. Now I

shall search for her among the diggers' tents ; she is not dead—I feel that. Oh, that I might live to see her again ! But no—justice demands otherwise. In my youth I believed not in a God of Love ; now I bow down to a God of Vengeance. I scoffed at the idea of a future punishment ; I credit it now, for I have known torture as keen as fire unquenchable or the ever-gnawing worm ; the guilty bear ever a hell within their own bosoms.”

As he uttered the last sentences, he rose from his seat and paced up and down beneath the trees, with a look of intense, unfathomable despair impressed upon his pale, wild features. He had become entirely unconscious of the presence of others ; and his auditors, deeply affected by his story—for his voice and gestures, his speaking countenance, had so forcibly aided his words—remained silent. They possessed hearts, and the grief of the father was sacred.

It took some time ere his natural pride and determination gave him a victory over his feelings. He then resumed his seat, and said, in tones rendered more soft and mellow by emotion—

may have even taken her ; and if she be not her you seek—”

“ I will set off at daylight. I will tear her from them ! ” and then, stern man as he was, he laid his face in his hands, and wept.

When he recovered himself, they pretended not to heed him, and he, pleased to escape observation, paced beneath the gum-trees till the sun arose. He was calmer then—that solitary communing with his troubled mind in the silent night had elevated his thoughts, and his heart had humbled itself in prayer.

As soon as he was out of hearing, the rough digger added to the information he had already given. The family with whom he suspected Elise to be, had moved to a run not twelve miles distant ; he had not dared to tell the father this till morning, lest he should start off during the night.

Soon after dawn, they all set out together ; assistance might be needed — nature was stronger than gold. Who would have refused to assist a father in recovering his child ?

They reached the station in a few hours. Elise, bonnetless, was standing in the little garden gazing sadly on some flowers. At the sight of so many strangers she half retreated ;

but her old name, in a well-remembered voice, brought her with a cry of joy to her father's arms.

Explanations ensued. The settler had not the remotest idea of the misery he had helped to inflict, but imagined that Elise was an orphan, and without friends; for the woman whom her father had well paid beforehand to take charge of her, had so represented her, and, at the same time, demanded and obtained no small sum for giving up the child to the settler, who thought he did the orphan girl a kindness in taking her out of the power of such a mercenary woman. The stratagem did not succeed, and the poor wife died, but Elise had been kindly treated.

The next day Herbert and his two mates, and the other party, set out for the diggings, leaving Elise and her father together at the settler's house. In vain the father offered assistance to the man who had led him to find his lost treasure.

"If I thought, sir, that it would turn your heart lovingly to God, I should be well rewarded, for it was He who put your story into your mouth last night."

CHAPTER VI.

An Australian Flood.

How came Herbert at the diggings?

Two years after the departure of the Willoughbys, the opportunity arrived for purchasing the land Mrs. Linton cultivated. As a first step, she wrote to her agent in London, to whose care she confided the management of her surplus money, and acquainted him with her desire to use it in buying the farm. No answer came. She wrote once more, and then learnt that he had absconded to America, taking with him, not only her own long-hoarded wealth, but that of many others.

The news fell upon her so unexpectedly that she received a shock, from which she never recovered. Her hope, so long cherished, was dashed to pieces, and her mental energy seemed broken. In a few months she died; and Herbert, in his grief at her loss, thought

neither of his altered expectations nor of Alice. Everything except the death of his mother seemed banished from his mind; but business was forced upon his attention: there were papers to look over—accounts to add up and settle—and this, in some measure, was beneficial. Among a mass of other papers, his eye rested upon a small delicate writing, which he seemed to recognise. It was addressed to himself; he opened it, and for the first time, read the letter in which Alice bade him farewell. He could not reproach the dead, for he felt that, as he had promised she should be nothing to him during his mother's lifetime, it was better, kinder, to leave him in ignorance of it; but it aroused again his old feelings, which had slumbered, not died away. He was now free to wed whom he would; and it seemed to him as though the mother, who had before opposed, would now, purified from the dross of earth, in spirit smile upon his love.

Full of new hopes, he determined to follow her. Mr. Willoughby had written to the Squire on his first landing; and Herbert, having thus learnt their address, threw up the farm, gave a last look to his mother's

grave, and, with all he possessed converted into specie, he sailed for Australia.

The vessel had almost reached her destination—she had sighted Port Phillip Heads—the wind was blowing heavily from the southward. In running in, the captain mistook the channel—the ship ran aground—the crew and passengers, taking to the boats, were saved; but the vessel, in a few days, became a total wreck, and very little of the property on board of her was saved.

Herbert landed almost penniless; pride would not let him thus seek Alice; the gold-diggings were giving out untold wealth, and thither he bent his steps.

At Fryer's Creek he was not successful, so his party journeyed on towards Eagle Hawk Gully. After the delay occasioned by the discovery of Elise, they reached that well-known spot. When first discovered, it was one among the richest gullies at Bendigo, but was now considered quite worked out, so it was not here that they pitched their tents. They went farther on—out of the usual track—and came to a small and retired gully, many miles distant. Here they determined to dig.

It was a secluded life that those three gold-seekers lived, far apart from the noisy canvass streets of the crowded diggings, only seeking the presence of their fellow-creatures when compelled to procure the necessary articles of food, or tools for labour. At first they were most successful; then followed weeks of continual disappointment; and the wet season, with its hosts of miseries, commenced. They still pursued their work, and their perseverance met its reward. In six weeks of daily good fortune they netted gold to the value of nearly £2000 apiece. It was great "luck," certainly. Many have done far better—thousands worse. In this case, the gold was gained by those who knew its value.

"Thank God! I may now seek Alice," was Herbert's thought. The partnership was soon dissolved, his nuggets and dust consigned safely to Melbourne, and Herbert left the diggings.

The first night he halted at a rough-looking inn; but as the rain was pouring in torrents, and his only option was to enter that or sleep in the wet, he walked inside the uninviting place. The first room was tenanted only by three men—diggers—who

were smoking vigorously; and the room, being small, was so filled with tobacco-smoke that it was impossible to see their faces. From the next apartment very noisy sounds proceeded. It was evidently tenanted by fourteen or fifteen people, who, from their *patois*, appeared to be Cornishmen. Some of them seemed to be in their cups, and rather quarrelsome; so Herbert, in spite of the fumes of tobacco, thought it best to remain where he was, for the three smokers looked quiet, harmless individuals.

He managed to grope his way to a table and chair against the wall, and soon a rough sort of waitress entered with a light and some food. Having discussed a good supper, Herbert, for want of something to do, endeavoured to enter into conversation with the diggers; but their pipes were too engrossing, and he gained short replies; so he was obliged, lacking better amusement, to turn his attention to the noisy but unseen beings near him.

He soon distinguished one more civilised, though trembling, as if aged, voice among the Cornishmen. He was probably not one of them; at all events, he could hear that

they were treating him very rudely, and one of the inebriated was endeavouring to fix a quarrel upon him. At length he heard the man say—

“Allow me to pass, if you please. I wish to reach the door.”

“No-a, no-a,” and something that sounded like a blow, reached Herbert’s ear.

It was evident that a fight now commenced. Herbert was about to enter the apartment, to prevent the old man from being abused, but one of the diggers held him back.

“Fool! keep quiet, if you want to have a whole bone in your body. You’d interfere with a set like that!”

Meanwhile, in the other room various remarks were being made as the contest proceeded.

“Who’s down naow?” said one, who, perhaps, was behind the others, and so could not see for himself.

“Stra-arnger!” replied another.

“Gie ’n skat.” (Kick him.)

A low groan followed.

Herbert could bear it no longer; he burst from the diggers; pushed open the door, and rushed among the Cornishmen.

“Cowards! Cowards!” he cried, “to treat an old man like this;” and, with the injured man in his arms, he boldly confronted his foes.

The men were staggered; taken by surprise. They were all a dreadful rough lot, but they admired his courage; and, as drops of blood from a wound in the old man’s head fell upon the floor, they began to feel a little ashamed of themselves. One or two, however, showed symptoms of discontent, and approached Herbert with doubled fists.

“Now, my men,” said he, “listen to me for two minutes; you’ve all of you some feeling; imagine it was your own father being used like this; what would you say then?”

The force of a good purpose and brave heart prevailed; the grumblers were silenced; and Herbert bore the old man away. He learnt that he had a daughter in the inn, who was asleep up stairs; she was soon aroused, and hastened to tend her father. The injuries that had been inflicted upon him were severe; but, under the good care of his daughter, there was every hope that he might soon recover.

Herbert was slightly delayed by this in-

cident; for early next morning he rode several miles to fetch a doctor, no one else volunteering to do so: but, having once seen the old man under medical hands, he pursued his journey, and for the next three days travelled on, stopping for the night at any station he passed; for he was getting more into the bush, where the settlers' hospitality is as warm as ever. The third day he had not journeyed far, the country in that part being low and almost impassable, for it was the month of August, and the wet season had been a heavy one; and he was still some miles distant from Menee Creek Station, at which Mr. Willoughby was overseer, whilst his sons and daughters found employment on the same station.

Accordingly, that night, Herbert stopped at a settler's, seven miles from Menee Creek; the next morning his host warned him not to proceed to his destination at present.

"The banks of Menee Creek," said he, "have long been overflown. I am only surprised that Mr. S—s's house has not been washed down, for it was built near the water."

"It was a foot deep in their rooms last

year," observed his wife; "he'll suffer for having put off moving."

This news only the more induced Herbert to hasten on. He learnt that Mr. S., the settler in question, was a bachelor, and that most of his people lived in the house. If Alice was among them, and exposed to danger! It was a hurried breakfast that he made, and, with hasty thanks to his hosts, he rode away, with Captain by his side.

It wanted but two hours of sunset ere he reached the spot where Menee Creek station should have stood. Paralysed with horror, he gazed upon the surging water that almost covered the valley. Soon his eye could distinguish the roof of the log-house above the stream, and dark forms clinging to it; and he, sure that the one he loved was there, was powerless to save. Suddenly he spied a large boat (used often by the settler to transport goods some way along the creek), which had evidently drifted away, and been caught by the lower branches of a tree. If he could but reach this! He descended the raised ground on which he stood, flung off some superfluous clothing, sprang into the water, and endeavoured to reach it. In this he was successful,

and soon was rowing (for he found the oars safely fastened inside) towards the shaking building. He reached it, and they saw him. Hope gave them strength to hold on until, one by one, they were in the boat; then, with great care, for the sides were nearly level with the water, they rowed till they reached a place of safety; and Herbert received the thanks he had so bravely earned—and, best of all, a glance which told of more than gratitude from Alice's soft dark eyes.

There is a pretty station in Victoria Felix, two hundred miles from Melbourne; it is not newly built, and creepers grow over it; whilst a vineyard, and a well-cultivated garden, abounding in peach and nectarine trees, give it an air of domestic comfort unfortunately not common in the bush.

It is a numerous family who live there—the Willoughbys—of which Herbert is now a member; and a more happy settler's home you may search for over vast Australia, but will never find.

LILIAN.

AN emigrant vessel had just anchored within Hobson's Bay, and all on board were crowding against the bulwarks to catch a glimpse of the Australian shores. There were rough labourers with their families, trusting that their days of privation were well-nigh over; mechanics determined to make a name in the new land; young men and women come out to join their families that had gone before; and some few desolate ones who had neither kith nor kin left upon earth, and who had all the struggles of a fresh era of life to commence, without a friendly hand to sustain or guide them.

Among these was Lilian Monteith.

Lilian was an orphan—at least she imagined so. Her mother had died three years

ago, and her father had deserted his wife and country since Lilian was twelve months old.

Many grave old people had shaken their heads when Lilian's mother, after a brief courtship, disappointed all her village suitors, and married Arthur Bellamy, of whom no one knew anything, except that he was a Londoner, come down to their rural district for a few months angling. But the mother of Lilian was an orphan, and of age, so she gave herself and her £5000 to the handsome stranger.

They moved to a distant part of the country, for Arthur could not bear, he said, to meet the indignant looks of her old friends for having deprived her native village of its fairest ornament; and for three years they lived in almost uninterrupted happiness.

Then the young wife first began to notice the change that gradually came over her husband—the moody silence—the constant fits of irritation—nights of broken slumber, and at length, keenest misery of all, his constant avoidance of herself or their little Lilian.

Soon the storm broke over the unhappy wife and mother. Arthur suddenly left her

to return no more. A few hurried lines alone told her the reason of his flight. His first wife was living. Her friends intended to prosecute him for his second marriage, and he had fled to bear the burden of his sin and misery alone.

When Lilian partially recovered from this blow, she retired with her daughter to a secluded village, re-assumed her own name, and, as a considerable portion of her fortune was untouched, trusted that she should be free from pecuniary troubles. But in this hope she was deceived. Her health and strength broken by the unexpected sorrow that had fallen upon her, she was compelled to place more reliance upon others than was judicious; and after many years of struggling with difficulties, she died, leaving her daughter penniless.

Until her mother's death, Lilian had always believed her father in the grave, but looking over her papers, she learnt the whole history; and thus was another trial added to those which already surrounded her.

She tried many means of earning a livelihood, but found, as thousands find, that

it is almost impossible for a woman, brought up above the lower classes, to do so, even if she disregard her health, and toil unremittingly.

At that time, Government emigration was much talked of, and many ladies, forming themselves into committees, collected subscriptions for the aid of their own sex desiring to emigrate. Lilian fell under their notice, and thus found herself on board the —; and at length, after a long and unpleasant passage, gazing curiously on the wild shores of Victoria Felix.

There were several cabin passengers in the —, who stood upon the poop, quite as excited as the poor emigrants at the safe termination of their long voyage, though more reserved in their manner of expressing the pleasure they felt.

Among them we shall only notice two—Mrs. Sotheby and her son, who stand together near the wheel, looking alternately through a telescope in the gentleman's hands. She was an officer's widow, with only her pension to subsist on, and an extravagant son as a never-failing source of uneasiness.

He had been brought up with great expectations from his father's relatives ; had, consequently, never devoted a moment of his life to any sensible pursuit ; and therefore, when his uncle suddenly married, and in the course of time had heirs of his own, he had literally no resource but dependence upon his mother.

Mrs. Sotheby had a brother in Australia whom she believed to be rich ; he was her only relative, and she determined to travel sixteen thousand miles for the sake of presenting his scapegrace nephew to him. Whilst on board the ——, as she had heard of the scarcity of female servants in Australia, she determined to engage one before landing, and her choice fell upon Lilian, who was delighted to accept the offer, as she dreaded to find herself alone and friendless in that unknown land. The only cause of annoyance was the presuming, making-free manner of young Sotheby ; but once in the bush, she reasoned, he would have better things to do than to stare at her.

On landing, therefore, she accompanied Mrs. Sotheby to her brother's station.

Mr. Purves was a grave, stern man of

fifty—a being of a totally different character to his worldly-minded sister; and Lilian soon learnt to look up to him as a friend; and such in numberless little matters he proved himself to her.

In Australia, more particularly in the bush, there is not that distance between servants and those they serve, as in England. Flung together often for companionship in a wild country, miles away from other human beings, masters and mistresses are often glad to make friends as well as servants of their household. So Lilian, who was looked upon as Mrs. Sotheby's own companion and attendant, found herself considered one of the family circle. A good deal of the consideration she received arose, doubtless, from the respectful manner in which she was treated by the master of the house, who evidently regarded her with more than common interest. She could scarcely repress the gratitude she felt as she discovered how greatly he discountenanced, and frequently circumvented, his nephew's disagreeable attentions, which, contrary to her expectations, the solitude of bush life had tended to increase.

Mr. Purves was not, unfortunately, possessed of the eyes of Argus, so that, although often frustrated, young Sotheby let no opportunity pass by for thus annoying Lilian. Not that he could possibly imagine it an annoyance; of course any girl in her senses, especially whilst living in such a savage land, would feel herself truly flattered by his notice; so he set down Lilian's cold, dignified way of treating him to a coquetry by which she expected to heighten her influence over him!

Small must have been his knowledge of women, except of the worst class; for Lilian disliked the very sound of his voice.

One morning he had been more insulting—or, as he would have termed it, flattering—than usual, and Lilian, who could scarcely restrain her tears, had rushed from the room and endeavoured to cool her excited feelings by a lengthened walk.

Perhaps, had her feelings been less susceptible and refined, she would have treated his conduct with cool contempt; but every insult, however slight, recalled the loss of her mother, and her strange fatherless condition, assailing her affections and pride in every point.

She looked more than usually beautiful as she strolled along. A tight-fitting dress of pink gingham displayed the exquisite proportions of her figure and graceful movements; a profusion of light curls shaded her fair young face; her eyes, sparkling with more than usual brilliancy, were flashing with indignation and wounded pride. Feeling quite alone, and being unaccustomed to encounter strangers in the bush, she carried her straw bonnet upon her arm, so that the soft air might freely play upon her face; and as she rambled onwards—now with hurried steps, now more slowly—she little guessed that she had two companions not far from her.

After walking a considerable distance, she ascended a rising ground which commanded a fine view of the surrounding scenery. Here she paused, when suddenly a sight met her eyes which almost forced a scream from her lips.

At some little distance from her was an object (which even so far off she rightly imagined to be a corpse) suspended above the earth to a height of about five feet from the ground. It was supported at one end by

the litter, on which the body was laid, being placed between the branches of a gum-tree, at the other by a stake driven into the ground and forked at the top, which elevated that portion of the bier nearest the feet.

Beneath the corpse a solitary native woman was sitting; none other of her tribe appeared in sight; alone she kept her solitary watch beside the dead. Far in the distance the purple hill-tops and drooping shea-oaks were bathed in the glowing light of an Australian sunshine; but near, where the sable mourner kept her strange vigil, the tall trees and thick bush shrubs flung a sombre tint, and formed an appropriate foreground.

In explanation of this native custom, the following account by Captain Keppel is well worth quoting.*

“When a native dies, he is wrapped up in the bark of a tree, and bound round with cord. A stage is made, by placing two forked branches, eight or ten feet in height, upright in the ground, the forks uppermost, distant from each other about five or six feet, and

* See “A Visit to the Indian Archipelago, in H.M.S. *Meander*.” By Captain the Hon. Henry Keppel, R.N.

facing the fork of a tree. A piece of wood is placed transversely, resting on the forks of the upright branches. A number of branches are then placed longitudinally, the ends resting in the fork of the tree and on the transverse piece. The whole slopes at a considerable angle, the uprights being shorter than the fork of the tree. This is done to prevent the lodgement of wet. Upon this inclined stage, the body, wrapped in its coffin of bark, is laid; and there it remains. Sometimes there is no stage, and the body, rolled up in a bundle, is laid upon, or suspended from, the branch of a tree. * * * A native would not go near one of these places of deposit at night by himself; but when they are obliged to pass them, they carry a fire-stick to keep off the spirit of darkness."

Having gazed for awhile upon this scene, Lilian withdrew with slow, light footsteps, so as not to disturb the dark woman's silent grief; but, whilst retracing her way to Mr. Purves's station, she was surprised by hearing the sound of steps behind her. She glanced round, almost fearing to meet the enraged

“Now, Lilian, I want to know more about you; you interest me exceedingly, and I am anxious to hear all you have past through. Will you answer me one question? Are you an orphan?”

“I believe so,” replied Lilian, casting her eyes to the ground.

“You believe so—you are not sure? Lilian, answer me truly: do you know, without a shadow of uncertainty, that your father is dead?”

“No,” said she, in an agitated voice. “Would to God that I knew where to find him—that I might see him!”

“Why?” interrupted her companion.

“To love him.”

“Could you? Pardon me, yours must be a strange history. I entreat you, confide in me.”

Lilian did so. She felt an influence—a pleasant influence—exerted over her whilst Mr. Purves spoke, and, seated beside him on a fallen tree, she told him the principal portion of her history.

He had covered his face within his hands as she proceeded, and, after she had finished

her recital, he remained thus for some time. When he raised his head, she saw that his eyes were moist, and his whole countenance betrayed deep and painful emotion. He could not speak, but, placing a small miniature in her hand, relapsed into his former position.

Lilian knew that it was her mother's portrait—not the worn-out, wasted mother that she had loved and nursed, but the fair, happy bride of Arthur Bellamy; and, so greatly did her daughter resemble her, that the likeness might have been taken for that of Lilian herself.

Great as had been his errors, Lilian remembered that years of lonely exile had followed them. She imagined the anxiety he must have felt since she had resided beneath his roof; whilst he was uncertain whether she was his child or not. She forgot the past, and remembered only that he was her father.

With gentle words she soothed the poignancy of remorse, and assured him of her affection; and, whilst tenderly healing the bitter sorrow her father experienced, new and happy sensations filled her own heart.

She no longer was alone in the world: she was beside her father.

When Mr. Sotheby left Lilian and Mr. Purves, he hastily sought his mother, and confided to her his suspicions that his uncle, in spite of his age, would soon find a young mistress for his household. This idea filled Mrs. Sotheby with wrath and indignation. That her hopes should be blighted by "an artful girl—an attendant of her own," was a climax of provocation that caused a violent outburst of rage. But when Mr. Purves appeared, and announced Lilian as his adopted daughter, and, as such, mistress of all he possessed, astonishment completely overbalanced her anger. Before she had quite recovered from this, Mr. Purves signified his intention of making a considerable increase to her income, on the condition that her son returned to England; and, as he appeared inflexible in this determination, she considered that there was no more to be obtained from him—so they sailed from Australia.

Lilian still gladdens her father's home.

GOING WITHOUT A DINNER,
AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

“WELL, well,” said Mark Appleby, impatiently, “get the money if you can, though I don’t expect you will; and,” shouldering his pickaxe and shovel, “if we do miss a meal to-day, it’s happened often before in Old England; besides,” he continued, in a softer tone, as he saw a tear trembling in his “gude-wife’s” eye, “when things are at the worst they’re sure to mend; and we’ve been ‘down upon our luck’ so long, that, for certain, there’ll be a change soon:” and he left the tent, whistling a merry tune, his retreating footsteps becoming gradually lost to hearing; whilst Mrs. Appleby stood disconsolately, with the corner of her apron to her eyes, absorbed in the all-important reflection—what she could have for dinner.

Now, to those who linger over this subject, undecided whether the soup shall be mock-turtle or mulligatawny, or whether the chickens shall be roasted or boiled, it is rather a pleasant method of passing a few spare minutes, than otherwise. But, when it is a matter of uncertainty as to whether there will be any dinner at all, it is a more serious affair; and in such a predicament was Mark Appleby's little wife at this moment.

She looked round the desolately empty tent—for the hundredth time that morning—with a lingering hope that some trifling article might have escaped her hands, and furnish the means of buying something to make a meal for the hard-working husband at mid-day; but her glance only fell upon the patched canvas walls, and from them upon a broken crockery plate, a battered tin pannikin, and a leaden spoon—which had a miserable-looking knife and fork for companions—that were lying upon the ground. If she might have had her own way, she would have disposed of the poor old tent then and there, for whatever it would fetch, and leave herself without a shelter; but this her husband had so strictly forbidden, that

she resisted the strong temptation she experienced to convert her habitation into something eatable.

It was certainly a most unhappy state of things; and, as her eyes rested on the small assortment of household goods before enumerated, she, like a genuine woman, threw herself on the ground, and gave way to a feminine fit of crying.

As this lasted some little while, there will be plenty of time before it is over to relate as much of her previous history as is necessary for general information.

Susan was the daughter of a large tenant farmer, and, being the youngest of several pretty sisters, had had the prophecy—that her lack of personal attractions must eventually end in old-maidism—so often and fully impressed upon her, that she had wasted less time in surmising what her future married life would be, or when there would be a chance of its commencing, than most young people of her age; so that when Mark Appleby appeared upon the scenes, fell in love with the quiet, gentle Susan, and actually proposed, before any of her better-looking

sisters had ever had a like dignity conferred upon them, she, in a tumult of gratitude and esteem, accepted him; and to these feelings, as time gave her a better insight into her intended's heart and character, a most sincere affection was speedily added. Of course there was opposition—there often is when two people are particularly well suited for one another. The father considered a merchant's clerk far beneath his daughter; the sisters turned up their noses because *they* had not been selected; everybody opposed it; but the two most concerned stood firm, and they were married at last, after a great deal of family dispute which would have been better spared, as it only created a firm fund of ill will on all sides.

At first the young couple got on very well. Susan was economical and industrious; Mark was steady, till one unfortunate moment, to serve a fellow-clerk, he put his name to a bill. The day of payment arrived, the bill was dishonoured, the *friend* absconded; and Mark was ruined. A very common story. After many trials and privations, they emigrated to Victoria, and had been for some months at the diggings, living, to use a homely phrase,

"from hand to mouth," and had at length arrived at the uncomfortable pitch of not knowing how to obtain the next meal, their only chance being the repayment of a few shillings lent by Mark, two or three months before, to a similarly unlucky digger, who, with his wife and child, was almost starving.

Mrs. Appleby had now finished crying, and, feeling somewhat relieved by this ebullition, put on her sun-bonnet and threadbare shawl, left the tent and what was in it to take care of itself, and proceeded down the gully to find out their debtor.

It was not a pleasant errand, as she herself fully felt whilst standing outside their tent, considering whether to enter or not; a remembrance of the alternative gave her courage, and she looked in.

There was poverty written in full bold characters on everything there; it was evident in the hard lines on the mother's brow, in the haggard looks and tattered dress of the child, in the sullen despair of the attitude of that weary, worn-out man.

"You are come for your own," said he, glancing at her as she stood in the doorway, angry and annoyed with herself for having

come, and hesitating what to say; “take it”—pointing to a little food (not enough for one hearty person’s dinner) that was lying on a block of wood—“take it—take the tent, if it were ours—*ours* indeed! That bit of bread and bone is all we have in this world. I sold my last tool to buy it—but, take it; you’ve a right. It’s only starving a few hours sooner,” he added, with a bitter smile.

That smile!—would that it could haunt the rich butterflies of Vanity Fair; and teach them there is something more worth living, striving for, than pleasure! Would that it could haunt them, till they give heed to the thousands—not at the antipodes, but close around them—who are dying a painful, lingering death, for want of the nourishment they would not deny their dogs.

Mrs. Appleby had a kind heart, and she had known sorrow; but, even had she neither possessed the one nor experienced the other, she must have been a fiend in petticoats to have acted otherwise than as she did. Pity and kind wishes were all she had; and these, with a few hope-encouraging words, she gave, then hurried away.

Poor woman ! she could not summon up sufficient philosophy to pass the store where she was accustomed to market ; so she turned on quite a new track, which led completely to the back of the principal stores and tents—a sort of “round turn”—by which she imagined she should contrive to reach her tent.

Someway or another, when one is unhappy, or put out about anything, the weather never seems right. It is either too warm or too cold, too sunny or too wet ; something sure to be wrong about it. And on this particular day there happened to be a little drizzling rain falling, which would have been a god-send to a nursery gardener at the same time of year in England, but which Mrs. Appleby considered as peculiarly aggravating, under the circumstances. Added to this, the road (if such it could be called) was rough and disagreeable ; and her eyes were blinded with tears. It is hard to tell whether her own troubles or those of the wretched family she had left, caused them to flow so copiously ; but they often occasioned her to stumble, and, once or twice, she very nearly fell.

At length she did so in good earnest. A

tiresome piece of stone, not very large, but projecting from the ground, caught her foot and overbalanced her. She was not hurt (with the exception of a few scratches and much mud on her face and hands), so she speedily regained her footing, when she perceived the stone that had been the origin of the mischief upon the surface of the ground, it having been dislodged by the violence of her fall. She picked it up and examined it, as many have a fancy for doing, because it had been the cause of annoying her, and then rubbed a little of the dirty soil away from it to see if it were quartz. The part which she had cleaned looked almost black, so she concluded it to be ironstone; and, knowing her husband was curious about the geology of the diggings, she carried it home, only wishing, as she weighed it in her hand, that it were gold—it seemed so heavy.

On reaching her tent, she began to feel so miserable at the idea of her husband coming home and finding no dinner, that she almost began to cry afresh; but, determined to exert herself and wile away the time till his return, she took the piece of stone to a small pool of water, and began washing it most

energetically. Suddenly she fancied the water sparkled. What a ridiculous thought! or were her senses leaving her? It actually appeared like gold. She drew it rapidly forth; she held it close to her eyes; it was no fancy. There were the rich veins of gold, intermingled with ironstone, and here and there some bright quartz—altogether as perfect a specimen, for its size, as Bendigo ever produced.

Mrs. Appleby was wild with delight. She guessed it at full two pounds' weight. There was no need to go without a dinner now; yet, how could she dispose of it? Quite impossible. No, it should remain unsold for Mark to see. Accordingly, after bestowing some few extra rubbings, she returned to her habitation—certainly not the same person, as far as one could judge by the expression of her countenance, or her light, cheerful step, as when she left it three hours before.

And this piece of gold, worth nearly £100, had been found not so very far from the spot where that wretched family had looked upon the last meal they had any hope of obtaining! But who thinks of this at the diggings, where it is a common thing for people to want food

whilst there are pounds' weight of the precious metal a few yards beneath their feet?

Having carefully dried her treasure, Mrs. Appleby picked up the broken plate which had lain neglected upon the floor, washed it, and deposited her *ci-devant* stone thereon, covered it over with an old piece of calico, and laid the whole upon the block of wood where her husband would expect to find his dinner, if there were any.

Though Mark had left his wife with a cheerful tune upon his lips, his heart felt anything but merry. He was vexed at her having to ask for a return of what at the time he had looked upon as a gift, and never expected to see again; and he was harassed with hard work, bad living, and constant disappointments. His party's want of success for some time had been so discouraging that the original number composing it had gradually dwindled to two—himself and Phil O'Brien, who was an Irishman in name, in accent, and in heart, which last contrived to keep him poor, for he could never pass distress without his pockets be-

coming lighter, or a merry-making or revel without joining it. Latterly, however, poor Phil—from lack, not of opportunities, but the “needful”—had been unable to indulge in either his donative or jovial propensities; and when they met together at their place of work, his face was almost as long and as wo-begone as Mark Appleby’s.

They commenced their labour in a sort of moody silence. Bucket after bucket was lowered into the hole to bail out the water which a night’s rain had left there; it was a chilly, uncomfortable job, particularly as they had scarcely any expectation of getting repaid for it. The last bucket full of water was hauled up; the contents flung aside, and a different description of hard work commenced. A strong peg was run into the ground about a yard from the edge of the pit, which was fifteen feet deep. To this peg a long stout rope was securely attached, and hung nearly to the bottom of the hole. Mark now prepared to descend with his tools, which he did easily enough by means of the rope, taking hand under hand till his feet reached the ground. He then set to with his pick, and began to excavate, constantly

shovelling the soil into the bucket for Phil to draw up, and discover whether worth the labour of washing, by testing in a tin dish a small portion of each lot. After an hour thus spent, Mark hit upon a vein of a totally different coloured earth, which his well-practised eye rightly judged to be more auriferous than usual.

“ I say, mate,” cried he, as he heaped the bucket almost fuller than it could well hold ; “ I say, mate, this seems kindly soil. I wish you ’d wash it carefully.”

Phil’s answer was almost telegraphic in its quickness, and consisted in leaning his face over the edge of the hole and grinning with no inconsiderable amount of satisfaction.

“ All right, eh ? ” said Mark, in a cheery tone.

“ I believe yer,” answered the other—in a rich brogue, impossible to transmit to’ paper—leaning his head over the pit to a most alarming extent, whilst his voice subsided to a whisper ; “ I believe yer, mate, shure and it’s iligintly right this time ; but don’t yer be goin’ tellin’ a ‘femmal crittur’ about it, or it’ll be all over the gully, and we’ll have a crowd o’ dirty varmint here, and the place

like a rabbit-warren by sunset ; so don't tell the missus."

Having delivered this important piece of advice to his comrade, and received from him a laughing promise to attend to it, he returned to his washing. Noon came, and Mark took a small quantity of the newly washed out gold to exchange on his way for a few necessaries, as he had little faith in the success of his wife's mission of the morning. When he made his appearance, therefore, at the tent, it was with a large loaf, meat, etc., in his hands, and a contented look upon his face, which altogether fairly puzzled his little wife.

"What's that?" inquired he, pointing to the covered-up plate, and rather surprised at there being any signs of a dinner.

"Something worth having," with a most mysterious look.

"How *did* you manage to get anything?"

"By going after the money you lent."

"They have a child to feed," said Mark, gravely ; "I hope—I *do* hope you only took what they could spare."

"If I only got what they could have spared, it would have been little enough. I

rather doubt if they would have parted with *that* willingly."

"What absurd mystery is this?" exclaimed Mark, rather testily putting down his goods, and uncovering the specimen, on beholding which, his momentary irritation gave way to astonishment, and he turned to his wife for an explanation. She, considering that he had been sufficiently teased, gave him a full and correct account of her adventure. It is sad to relate that, upon hearing this, Mark completely forgot his promise to Phil, and, discussing the double good fortune of the morning, made their simple dinner pass off most pleasantly.

Mrs. Appleby did not forget the misery she had witnessed; and her husband was deeply touched, though he said little. That evening he engaged the poor digger as a third hand, which was almost necessary, so as to get through as much as possible before the usual rush took place; and, although that "femmal crittur," Mrs. Appleby, nor, indeed, any of the party, whispered a word of their lucky hole, neighbours somehow found out that Appleby's party were doing well, and

the place was “worked out” before they had gained as much as they had hoped for.

Mark now thought of the spot where the specimen had lain hidden so long; and here, without attracting any observation—as it was a place rather out of people’s way—the three dug, shovelled, and cradled to such good purpose, that two of them determined to relinquish the digger’s life.

Phil remains there now; it suits him; but he never grows rich, and never will, for he squanders or carouses his money away as fast as it comes in.

The once very starved family purchased land in Van Diemen’s Land, and live with every comfort.

The Applebys returned to England.

There was a pretty cottage residence to be sold a little out of the town of S—, “a complete *bijou*—fitted up regardless of expense,” as the advertisement said. This Mark Appleby bought, for he was now a junior partner of the house in which he had once been clerk.

All Susan’s sisters (none of them are married yet, though, as during the last ten years,

always expecting it)—all S. L.'s sisters were exceedingly affectionate on her return, and "dear, kind Mark" was "quite a brother" to them. As neither of the girls were deficient in common sense, the sudden fit of regard was, doubtless, estimated at its exact value.

"How much happiness we may date from the day you served up a specimen for dinner," said Mark, as they sat together over a cheerful fire for the first time alone in their new house.

"Yes," said Mrs. Appleb. "but it would never have been found had you not told to others what you were almost in need of yourself."

There is a moral in this little sketch, dear reader, but perhaps so old-fashioned and commonplace that it's not worth pointing out.

END OF VOL. I.

